

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:                      AFFIRMING IDENTITY: COMMUNITIES  
CULTIVATING HERITAGE

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In the continuing battle to dismantle systemic racism critically evaluating the condition of the built environment proves especially necessary. The history of urban renewal and gentrification within Washington D.C. exists as an ever present danger to the black and brown communities who live there. The Anacostia Neighborhood proves a culturally rich and underserved community that should be celebrated and supported by its built environment. This thesis seeks to unpack the layers of history and heritage within Barry Farm and present an alternative . Affirming Identity proposes creating a community anchor that utilizes equitable design practices to catalyze community engagement and activity in stagnant zones while celebrating and affirming the Identity of Anacostia.

AFFIRMING IDENTITY: COMMUNITIES CULTIVATING HERITAGE

By

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Advisory Committee:  
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## Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the members of the Barry Farm Public Housing community, as well as the patients and workers at the St. Elizabeth's Hospital. May their histories be remembered, their stories heard, and their reflections seen for years to come.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been made possible without the help and support of my committee members; namely, Professor Madlen Simon who always asked such thoughtful questions and provided insightful guidance, Professor Lindsey May who encouraged me to trust my instincts, and Professor Jana Vandergoot who challenged me to dive deeper.

I would also like to thank my amazingly talented friends and colleagues, Jemimah Asamoah, Jefferson Choi, Sarah Fuller, Bhavisha Venkatraman, Zuzanna Nowosielska, for their help along this journey.

I dedicate a special thanks to my family who never fail to show their love and support for me. Without them I would be nothing.

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## Chapter 1: Ward 8, Anacostia, D.C.

### *Introduction: Equity, place, and Race*

The United States tumultuous history, and present day struggle, with systemic racism and its products is evidenced in many facets of our everyday lives; the built environment being no exception. Words such displacement, equity, and gentrification have recently become popularized surrounding discussions involving development and urbanism for good reason. As this thesis seeks to propose an alternative plan for a community on the precipice of erasure, it proves necessary to first establish a theoretical framework in which to be most impactful and effective: architectural social activism.

Social activism, as is defined by Amherst College, “is an intentional action with the goal of bringing about social change.”<sup>1</sup> Architecture inextricably impacts society as it exists socially in nature. Decisions involving infrastructure, planning, real estate and countless other components of the built environment are reflective of the current social climate. As we move into a more inclusive and consciously minded era in our society, the existing conditions of our urbanism elucidate a dark past intentionally set on exclusion and division. Washington D.C., among other major cities in the United States, demonstrates this past very clearly.

Prior to exploring the context of D.C. it proves necessary to first understand the history of equity, place, and race within the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> Amherst College. “Social Activism.” Social Activism | Public Interest Careers | Amherst College. Accessed December 14, 2020.  
[https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/careers/amherst-careers-in/government-nonprofit/picareers/careers/social\\_activism](https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/careers/amherst-careers-in/government-nonprofit/picareers/careers/social_activism).

## *Exploring the History and Culture of Ward 8: Anacostia*

Along the SouthEast region of Washington D.C., beyond the Anacostia River, resides a historically rich and culturally vibrant community that has been largely unacknowledged and marginalized. The experience as one moves from the Congressional heights side of the 11th st bridge into Anacostia evidences physical and invisible barriers wrought by infrastructure and planning tactics implemented during a time where racial tensions were at an all time high in the not too distant past. The city's foundations baked in patriarchy, slavery, and poverty since its early start as a colonial settlement casts a long shadow the neighborhood continues to feel to this day.

### *Early settlement and slavery*



*Figure 1 City of Washington Map  
(Source: Library of Congress, Division of Maps)*

We look to the Anacostia river itself, as it exists as a tributary of the Potomac River and spans across



178 square miles, serving as a watershed to Prince Georges and Montgomery county, as well as a good portion of the District of Columbia<sup>2</sup>. As early inhabitants characteristically settled in close proximity to bodies of water, the “Nacotchtanks,” the native peoples of the Anacostia, used the river as means for commerce; thus the name Anacostia is a Latinized derivative from the word “anaquashatanik”, which roughly translates to “ a trading village,” in their language<sup>3</sup>. As the river housed 2500 acres of wetlands its natural resources primed the village to be a thriving trade hub<sup>4</sup>.

As English, European settlers voyaged to explore the Potomac river toward the 17th century -- already having “[cartographical]” knowledge of the Chesapeake bay and its tributaries the century prior -- they began to establish permanent residence in Maryland. Once settled, around the 1630s, the settlers engaged in the native commerce; namely beaver pelt trading and plantation agriculture. Conversely, the Nacotchtanks “had become sophisticated consumers” purchasing tools, and piece goods such as Dutch cloth. While the cohabitation of the natives and the foreign settlers within the region remained neutral, things began to take a turn toward the 1640s as the beaver trade in Anacostia declined and adjacent native tribes expanded southward militaristically. Within the next two decades the English settlers began taking more liberties in creating their own farms and “impinging on lands” the native tribes used for hunting and gathering without regard to their claims.<sup>5</sup> By 1680, the native peoples were expelled from the region completely, having blended into other

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<sup>2</sup> Wennersten, John R. *Anacostia : The Death & Life of an American River*. Baltimore, Md.: Chesapeake Book, 2008

<sup>3</sup> Siglin, Doug. “The Anacostia in History.” Anacostia Waterfront Trust. Anacostia Waterfront Trust, October 15, 2015. Last modified October 15, 2015. Accessed December 14, 2020. <https://www.anacostiastrust.org/anacostia-trust/2015/10/15/the-anacostia-in-history>.

<sup>4</sup> Wennersten, John R. *Anacostia* (5-8)

<sup>5</sup> Wennersten, John R. *Anacostia* (12)

tribal communities or moving on entirely; not to mention exposure to Old World diseases. In a similar fashion, native populations dissipated throughout the tributaries entering the 18th century. What's more, within the timespan of 1660 to 1690, the European population in Maryland exploded from a humble 2,500 to 20,000; the figure also considering inmates and free men. Once free of its indigenous populations, Prince George's county officially became established in 1693 and with it, the dawn of a new colonial society, not to mention an up and coming participant of a global market economy, that would gradually transform the Anacostia into "a metaphor for patriarchy, slavery, and poverty,"<sup>6</sup>

At the close of the following century the Anacostia river became a major shipping center, as well as a thriving plantation economy, which made it a favorable location to establish the capital city of the country. Its natural resources, navigable waters and revered landscapes continued to garner the attention of nearby colonists. As the fur industry eroded due to overhunting of animals, tobacco rose to sovereignty as the main cash crop necessitating the intensive labor of unwillingly supplied by African slaves, which became a commonality by 1750. With the added benefit of the Anacostia, Potomac, and Patuxent rivers becoming essential links for commerce and communication, between 1790-1800 the greater context became home to the District of Columbia. While the 18th century marked a new epoch for the New World, the natural abundance which made it so quickly depleted. The exhaustion of nitrogen and potassium in the soil contributed to the tremendous physical and chemical changes of the Anacostia River, only made worse by rapid population growth and excess human and animal pollution.

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<sup>6</sup> Wennersten, John R. Anacostia (pg 16)

The plantation system not only proved detrimental for the physical environment of the Anacostia, but its social contingency as well. An unfortunate commodity popularly sold at the start of the eighteenth century were African slaves; in fact eight thousand Africans were brought and sold in the Potomac between 1727 and 1709.<sup>7</sup> Slave populations continued to grow exponentially across Prince George's -- reaching up to half its inhabitants, Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties, however, the consistently skewed ratio of men to women would create an imbalance in how black community life would develop.<sup>8</sup> Additionally slaves faced severe social control from their slave owners and adult slave reproductive rates proved low. Despite the labor system creating insufferable living conditions for the enslaved, the populations resilience prevailed as the possibility to live beyond slavery loomed over the horizon of the American Revolution. Unfortunately what awaited was more of the same: a fluid understanding of "free" and "slave" as it pertains to blacks.

Still a smattering of small settlements along the river, Anacostia remained largely undeveloped well into the nineteenth century. While the settlement did not grow as expected, institutional building began to take root; namely St. Elizabeth's hospital for the Insane in 1853. Similarly, around the 1850s the Historic District of Anacostia came about by private efforts to establish a suburban settlement for white government officials that later became known as Uniontown.<sup>9</sup> Soon thereafter, during the Civil War, the site remained in close proximity to, as well as served as, the location of the Nation's war defenses. Those fleeing from enslavement flocked to the

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<sup>7</sup> Wennersten, John R. *Anacostia* (27)

<sup>8</sup> Wennersten, John R. *Anacostia* (28)

<sup>9</sup> Historic Preservation Office, Patsy M Fletcher, and Kim Elliot. *Ward 8 Heritage Guide*. Washington , D.C.: Historic Preservation Office (HPO), n.d. ( 7)

Union forts and would eventually lead to the establishment of a community for newly emancipated slaves. “The 1880 census records also bring to light another interesting aspect of uniontown. Restrictive covenants provided that “no lot should be conveyed to any negro, mulatto, or person of African blood...”<sup>10</sup> This proves contrary to the eventual habitation of the region and current demographic.

### *Entering the 20th century*

The Civil War presented a unique environmental dilemma for the river as the population of the District of Columbia tripled in size, causing excess pollution from commercial areas, as well as waste from residences, to mix in with eroded sediment in the tidal wetlands. Mosquitoes quickly populated such areas and introduced insect-borne diseases to the people. By the early 1900s the condition of the river motivated plans to create a dam and park to address its unclean condition. Some thirty years later, President Theodore Roosevelt commissioned the National Park service to create a recreational park.

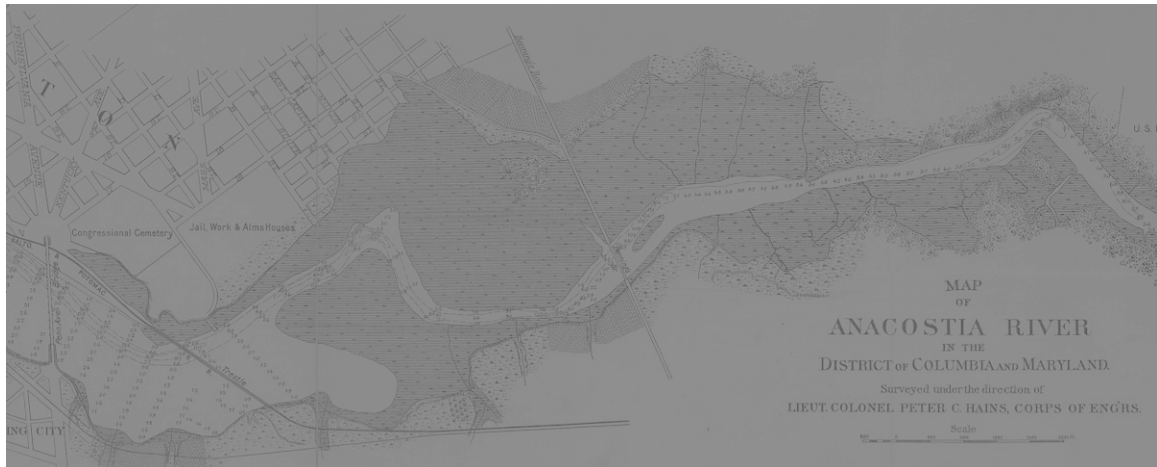
After the civil war industry began migrating along the shorelines in efforts to eliminate marshland and make the river more navigable<sup>11</sup>. The facilities there, all-be-it short lived, included the Anacostia Naval Air Station and Naval research laboratory, a national guard camp, Washington’s almshouse, a potter’s field, and a Steel Company which brought employment to the local residents. The population of

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<sup>10</sup> Historic Preservation Office, and National Park Service. *Washington, DC SP Anacostia Historic District*. Washington, D.C.: National Register of Historic Places, 1978.

<sup>11</sup> Historic Preservation Office, Patsy M Fletcher, and Kim Elliot. *Ward 8 Heritage Guide*. Washington , D.C.: Historic Preservation Office (HPO), n.d.

the ward remained small in comparison to the rest of the city, the majority of its residents from the St. Mary's psychiatric treatment facility, until a residential boom, population size increasing upwards of 300,000 residents, incited by expansion of government agencies and employment during World War II.



*Figure 2: District Division of Maps (Source: Library of Congress)*

Due to constant flooding the corps of engineers built walls along the west and the east banks of the river, momentarily suspended by the war in 1942. These parameters, while necessary to prevent flooding, have also reinforced intended barriers between communities. The major infrastructural developments that remain today, as a matter of fact, continue to perpetuate this feeling of separation.

An example of this would be targeted efforts to clean or purify designated “problem areas,” many of which were dwellings for African Americans and the poor. “Tens of thousands more have been displaced by the elimination of alley dwellings, “urban renewal” of entire sections of the city, and clearing for new government

buildings. Affordable, high-density housing became a priority. This growth and change deeply affected the part of the city east of the Anacostia<sup>12</sup>.”

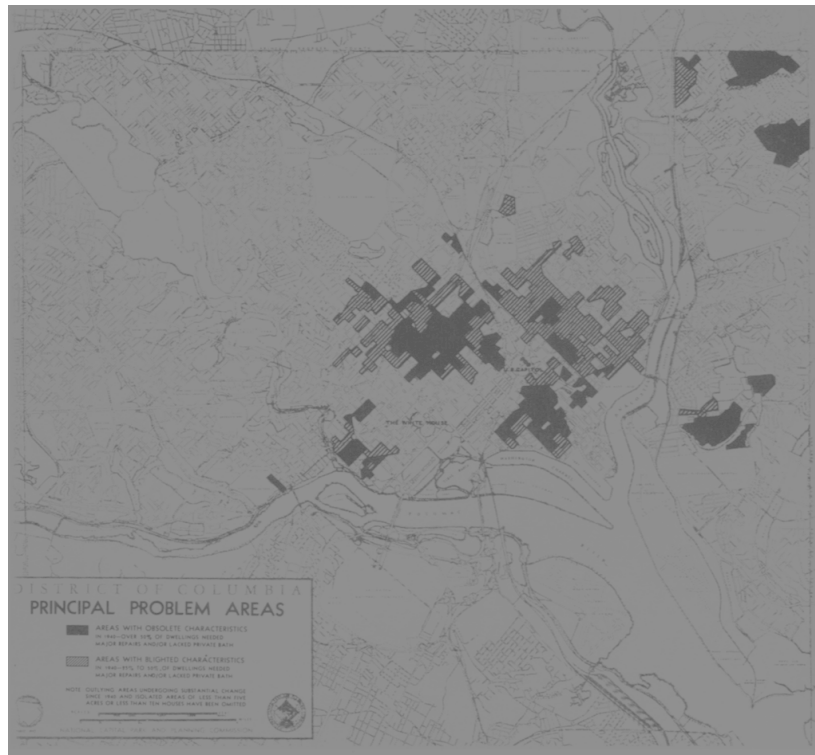
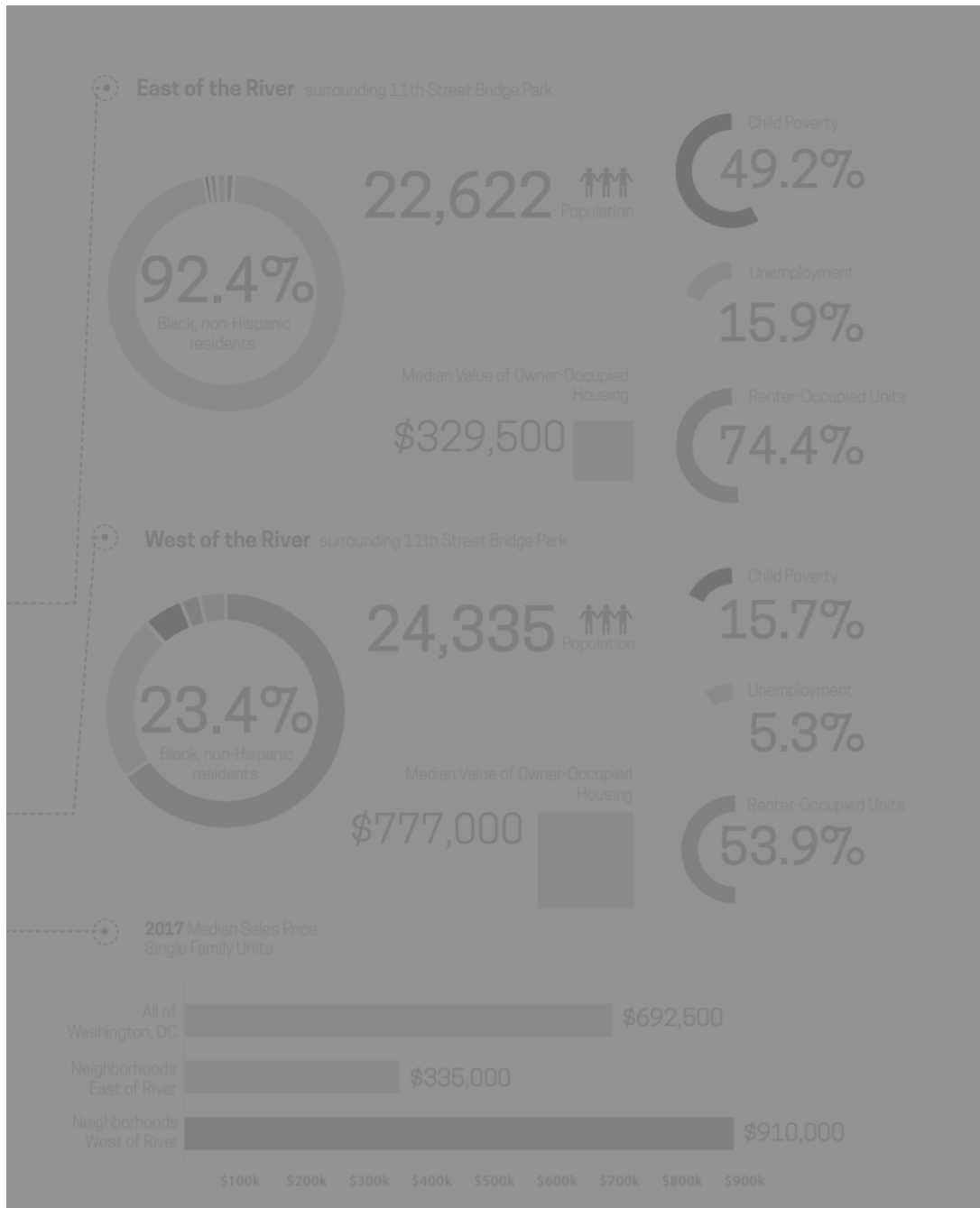


Figure 3: Principle Problem Areas (source: Washington D.C. Office of Planning)

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<sup>12</sup> Siglin, Doug. “The Anacostia in History.” Anacostia Waterfront Trust. Anacostia Waterfront Trust, October 15, 2015. Last modified October 15, 2015. Accessed October 18, 2020.



*Figure 4: Demographic data: Capitol Heights and Anacostia  
(Source: BBAR Equitable Development Plan)*

## Chapter 2: Case Study and Adjacent Development Review

Development within the context of Washington D.C. often triggers fears of increased costs of living and eventual displacement for the communities existing within the margins of society; namely minorities and the impoverished. This phenomenon is otherwise known as gentrification: "...what occurs when communities experience an influx of capital and concomitant goods and services in locales where those resources were previously non-existent or denied.(pg 2)."<sup>13</sup> The guise under which this has occurred has evolved over time, harkening back to the days of Burnham's Mcmillan plan and the City Beautiful movement to "urban renewal," and more recently, 'community redevelopment'.

As evidenced in reviewing the history of Anacostia in Chapter 1 the civil war proved a significant turning point in the relationship between the capital and the nation. An increase in federal work opportunities due to the development of public works improved local economies, and brought the District closer to its long sought after acclaim and authority. As I shall explore within the case studies, the push to enhance public works, namely the implementation of a functional sewerage system, grading, and repaving major roads, create a historical precedent to which future urban renewal and community redevelopment efforts would follow. A notable change that also took place during this time was the leap in population size between 1860 and 1870, which also meant a shift in demographics, indicating a substantial increase of African American occupation within the District. As time progresses toward the 20th

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<sup>13</sup> Prince, Sabiyha. *African Americans and Gentrification in Washington, D.c. : Race, Class and Social Justice in the Nation's Capital*. Urban Anthropology. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2014.



century and beyond, an inverse shift as a result of development and gentrification occur.

This chapter will look closely at adjacent, and similarly scaled neighborhoods, that have experienced instances of, or have confronted, gentrification in one form or another.

### *Shaw neighborhood, Washington D.C.*

Residing within the 8 sq mile boundary of L-Street, Rhode Island Ave, 11th st E, and 7th st NW the Shaw neighborhood, otherwise referred to as U-Street or the “heart of the Chocolate City,” came into existence around the late 17th Century. Prior to receiving its designation as a historic district in 1999, even before its nomination as Shaw, the rural setting humbly featured woods, a few scattered apple orchards, as well as a commercial corridor to which Maryland farmers would transport their goods to the main city<sup>14</sup>. During this early period, under the administration of the Territorial Government, a board of public works became established and was led under the leadership of Commissioner Alexander R. Shepherd.<sup>15</sup> The Board subsequently launched a massive campaign to improve infrastructure and modernize the city in the 1870s; yielding sidewalks, streetlamps, graded streets, as well as water and sewer services.<sup>16</sup> Receiving an endowment of \$20 million, the region was primed to remain a significant part of the city. Development spurred not long after improvements

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<sup>14</sup> Fenty, Adrian M. “Shaw Investment Plan.” Washington D.C.: D.C. Office of Planning, April 2008.

<sup>15</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Mount Vernon West Historic District, Mount Vernon West Historic District (Washington , D.C.: National Register of Historic Places, 1999), pp. 27

<sup>16</sup> District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office Office of Planning. *Shaw Historic District*. Washington , District of Columbia:Anne Brockett, 2008, pp. 2-3

expanded toward 9th and 11th streets, including streetcar lines, by 1874 which helped to attract new residents and businesses.<sup>17</sup>

Post-Civil War development exploded towards the district's current boundaries, introducing streetcar lines along its main thoroughfares and fostering commercial development in the 7th and 9th street corridors<sup>18</sup>. The development that populated the region in its early surge proved equally as diverse as those who took up habitation there.

### *Early Displacement*

Small communities of freed slaves who settled along the outskirts of Washington D.C. during the Civil War were among the first to dwell in Shaw-- named after Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, the military commander of the first voluntary, "all-Black Military company in the union Army<sup>19</sup>"-- along with Jewish, Irish, and German immigrants. Many of these early settlers sought their livelihoods working at the nearby markets and resided within the complex of alleys within the neighborhood<sup>20</sup>. As one of the most populous alleys to house working class residents, Goat Alley also exists as a testament to the residential demographic shift of majority White-immigrants to almost entirely African Americans as society moved toward the

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<sup>17</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Mount Vernon West Historic District, Mount Vernon West Historic District (Washington , D.C.: National Register of Historic Places, 1999), pp. 28

<sup>18</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Fenty, Adrian M. "Shaw Investment Plan." Washington D.C.: D.C. Office of Planning, April 2008. pp.10

<sup>20</sup> Fenty, Adrian M. "Shaw Investment Plan." Washington D.C.: D.C. Office of Planning, April 2008. pp.10

Jim Crow era by the start of the 20th century.<sup>21</sup> During this time, Shaw had become a predominantly African American neighborhood as housing and employment opportunities proved limited around Washington D.C. due to segregation.<sup>22</sup>

Along with the overt marginalization and infringement of the African American population, sanctioned activity to forcibly remove residents within this community grew rampant. As most of the alley-dwellings were 2-story row houses constructed using wood-framing or masonry, often existing within tight quarters, municipalities and private organizations, with the help of building codes, enabled the removal of said dwellings.<sup>23</sup> As these dwellings proved notorious for housing illicit establishments such as gambling houses and brothels, an underlying moral agenda further supported the permanent removal of alley dwellings, effectively rendering remaining dwellings to take on industrial and service functions, as well as accommodating the automobile as it rose to household status within the American society. In fact, previously designated industrial sites adapted gradually to fit car-oriented uses such as parking garages, gas stations, and auto stores.

At the height of D.C. 's predominantly African American status in the early 20th century, "Shaw became the center professional, commercial, educational and cultural life in Washington's black community."<sup>24</sup> Businesses and institutions were created to serve the community as well as various cultural hubs that fostered community activity; not to mention the neighborhood's unmistakable arts scene that

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<sup>21</sup> District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office Office of Planning. *Shaw Historic District*. Washington , District of Columbia: Anne Brockett, 2008.pp. 5-6

<sup>22</sup> Fenty, Adrian M. "Shaw Investment Plan." Washington D.C.: D.C. Office of Planning, April 2008. pp.10

<sup>23</sup> District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office Office of Planning. *Shaw Historic District*. Washington , District of Columbia: Adrian M. Fenty, 2008.pp.6

<sup>24</sup> Fenty, Adrian M. "Shaw Investment Plan." Washington D.C.: D.C. Office of Planning, April 2008. pp.10

exists to this day. The events following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 marked a significant turning point for the neighborhood as riots and looting devastated its major economic corridors, compounding Shaw's decline toward the end of housing segregation in the 1950s.<sup>25</sup>

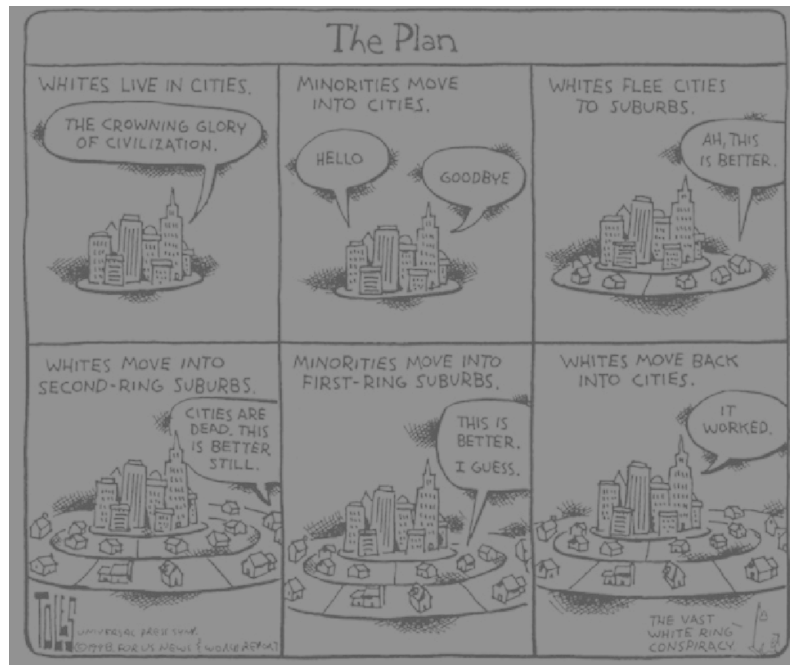


Figure 5 “The Plan” (Source: *The Washington Post*)

The mid-twentieth century proved particularly challenging for African Americans living within inner cities as the result of the actions and decisions made by predominantly white figures in positions of authority. In Shaw, efforts to rebuild the community were initiated by an organized group of Shaw-based professionals, the Model Inner City Community Organization (MICCO), as well as the collective efforts Lincoln Temple United Church and Westmoreland Congressional church proceeded

<sup>25</sup> District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office Office of Planning. *Shaw Historic District*. Washington , District of Columbia:Anne Brockett, 2008.pp.12

throughout the 1970s<sup>26</sup>. At the completion of these community led works, urban renewal plans by the Redevelopment Land Agency sought to revitalize O Street, one of the majorly devastated commercial corridors within the neighborhood, as part of a greater commercial rehabilitation effort.<sup>27</sup> In the latter years of the decade large apartment complexes and public buildings began to populate along 7th and 9th street, hindering commercial activity. The density of public housing and the continual social barricading of the community within the neighborhood engendered issues commonly associated with the “quintessentially black ghetto” including concentrated poverty, high demand of public assistance and medical care, as well as hunger among other issues<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office Office of Planning. *Shaw Historic District*. Washington , District of Columbia: Adrian M. Fenty, 2008.pp.10

<sup>27</sup> District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office Office of Planning. *Shaw Historic District*. Washington , District of Columbia: Adrian M. Fenty, 2008.pp.12

<sup>28</sup> Hyra, Derek S. *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City*. E. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. Pp 6



Figure 6 Neighborhood Shifts Over Time (Source: District of Columbia Office of Planning)

Table A.1. Population Change.					
	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 00–10
DC	638,328	606,900	572,059	601,723	5
Old DT	2,167	2,714	3,417	5,828	71
Shaw/U St.	28,723	29,567	29,741	34,750	17
Source: US Census Bureau.					
Table A.2. Percentage Black.					
	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 00–10
DC	70	66	60	51	-15
Old DT	54	64	56	20	-64
Shaw/U St.	81	67	53	30	-43
Source: US Census Bureau.					
Table A.3. Percentage White.					
	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 00–10
DC	27	30	31	39	26
Old DT	22	17	25	61	144
Shaw/U St.	16	20	23	53	130
Source: US Census Bureau.					

Figure 7 Select Washington, DC, Old Downtown, and Shaw/U Street Demographics (Source: U.S. Census Bureau)

## *Development*

As the District of Columbia experienced an economic surge at the turn of the 21st century the Neighborhood Investment Fund (NIF) came into formation with the mission of developing the physical character and transforming the reputation of the city, beginning with Downtown Washington. The Fund, at the time of defining its first twelve target areas for redevelopment supported five programs, using copious amounts of public and private investment, toward improving education, housing, community facilities, job training, and economic development. While the overarching objectives of the plan claims to prioritize D.C. residents, the statistics demonstrate the opposite.

*“The neighborhood, which was 90 percent African American in 1970, was just 30 percent Black in 2010, and yet much of its African American history has been institutionalized and preserved in a variety of ways.”<sup>29</sup>*

Derek S. Hyra, Urban policy scholar and author of *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City*, discusses a phenomenon known as “Black Branding,” where “versions of black identity are expressed and institutionalized in a community’s social and built environments<sup>30</sup>” without particularly proving beneficial to the possessors of that identity. He goes on to mention racial tourism, a phrase coined by acclaimed

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<sup>29</sup> Hyra, Derek S.. *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City*, University of Chicago Press, 2017. pp77

<sup>30</sup> Hyra, Derek S. *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City*. E. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. Pp 75

scholar Michelle Boyd, and the appropriation of African American signage, art, buildings, and historic and cultural symbols are displayed “to assert the Identity of the neighborhood.”<sup>31</sup> This very phenomenon has significantly shifted the neighborhood redevelopment and revitalization strategies to maintain some semblance of benignity; yielding less than benign outcomes toward community preservation.

### *Cultural Displacement*

Upscale fast food establishments, organic grocery stores, and the presence of a Starbucks often prove the usual indicators of gentrification within a neighborhood. Some of the more violent occurrences as a result of gentrification include the criminalization of everyday activity by the very residents vulnerable to displacement. Such is the case in a recent occurrence of a noise complaint turned lawsuit threat issued by a resident living in a new, luxury apartment building adjacent to a historic cultural hub within one of Shaw’s historically prominent economic corridors.

Go-go, a “drum-based fusion of funk, rap and R&B”<sup>32</sup> genre of music emerged around the 1970s in the heart of the “chocolate city”. As stated by Chuck Brown, the pioneer and proclaimed “Godfather” of go-go, in an interview with NPR prior to his passing in 2012, its name is derived from the “groove...a feeling...that

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<sup>31</sup> Boyd, Michelle R. 2008. *Jim Crow Nostalgia: Reconstructing Race in Bronzeville*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Hyra, Derek S.. *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City*, University of Chicago Press, 2017. Pp 75

<sup>32</sup> Kurzius, Rachel. “Go-Go Music Is Back At Shaw's Metro PCS Store.” DCist. WAMU 88.5 - American University Radio, April 10, 2019. Last modified April 10, 2019. Accessed November 12, 2020. <https://dcist.com/story/19/04/10/go-go-music-is-back-at-shaws-metro-pcs-store/>.



goes on and on and on.”<sup>33</sup> This very music often played on speakers outside of the T-mobile store, now MetroPCS, anchored along 7th Street and Florida Avenue NW since 1995. The antagonistic luxury apartment resident aforementioned demanded the music stop playing otherwise they would sue the store. Referring back to “black branding” and how black culture is appropriated to promote community redevelopment, in the same token, this very culture when upheld by its very progenitors --even their existence or occupation of space-- are seen as an affront to the new, white residents moving in.<sup>34</sup>

Since this occurrence, the movement “#dontmutedc”-- the viral hashtag coined by Howard University alumnus on twitter-- as well as the organization “Don’t mute DC” have emerged in response. As this became a larger conversation about the systemically racialized injustices within Washington D.C., the movement brought about significant impacts early on.<sup>35</sup> A petition to protect the right to play go-go at this prominent intersection by the joint initiative of “peace activist Ronald Moten and cultural Dr. Natalie Hopkinson,” ushered in a mass of 80,000 signatures demonstrating support from across the United States as well as 94 countries.<sup>36</sup>

This was not the first instance go-go came under fire. In the 1990s the genre was criminalized and used as a scapegoat for violent activity taking place at go-go

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<sup>33</sup> Rob Walker, “Washington DC’s Go-Go Music Hits Back in Fight against Gentrification,” *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, December 14, 2019), last modified December 14, 2019, accessed November 15, 2020,

<sup>34</sup> David Alpert (Founder), Dan Reed, April 8, 2019&nbsp;89. “Urbanist Villain of the Week: The Shay Resident Who Killed Go-Go Music in Shaw.” Greater Greater Washington. Last modified April 8, 2019. Accessed November 12, 2020.

<sup>35</sup> Culture Caucus, “Don’t Mute DC,” *The Kennedy Center*, last modified 2020, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.kennedy-center.org/artists/d/do-dz/dont-mute-dc/>.

<sup>36</sup> Don’t Mute, “ORIGINS & IMPACT,” Don’t Mute DC, last modified 2020, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.dontmutedc.com/origins-impact>.

venues<sup>37</sup>. This was during an era when D.C. had earned the reputation as the “murder capital of America,” creating even greater sensitization of the shooting that resulted in the death of a man at a Chuck Brown performance in 1992.<sup>38</sup> Go-go soon thereafter was forced into the underground, however, never dissipated and maintained its presence despite surviving various periods of opposition.

*The Navy Yards, Washington D.C.*

Among the most gentrified portions of the District of Columbia exists the Navy Yards, whose history is one that proves closely tied to that of the Nation's Capital and the nation itself. The Department of the Navy was conceived during the country's undeclared war with France during 1798 in which its first secretary, Benjamin Stoddert, acquired government funding toward the construction of ships and drydocks<sup>39</sup>. Located along the Anacostia River, across from the Ward 8 Neighborhood, the Navy Yard proved aptly sized for the construction large navy vessels, as opposed to the smaller privately-owned yards in use up to this point, and particularly advantageous for its secure location against attack, as well as proximity to lumber and building materials<sup>40</sup>. The Yards were instrumental in Union Naval

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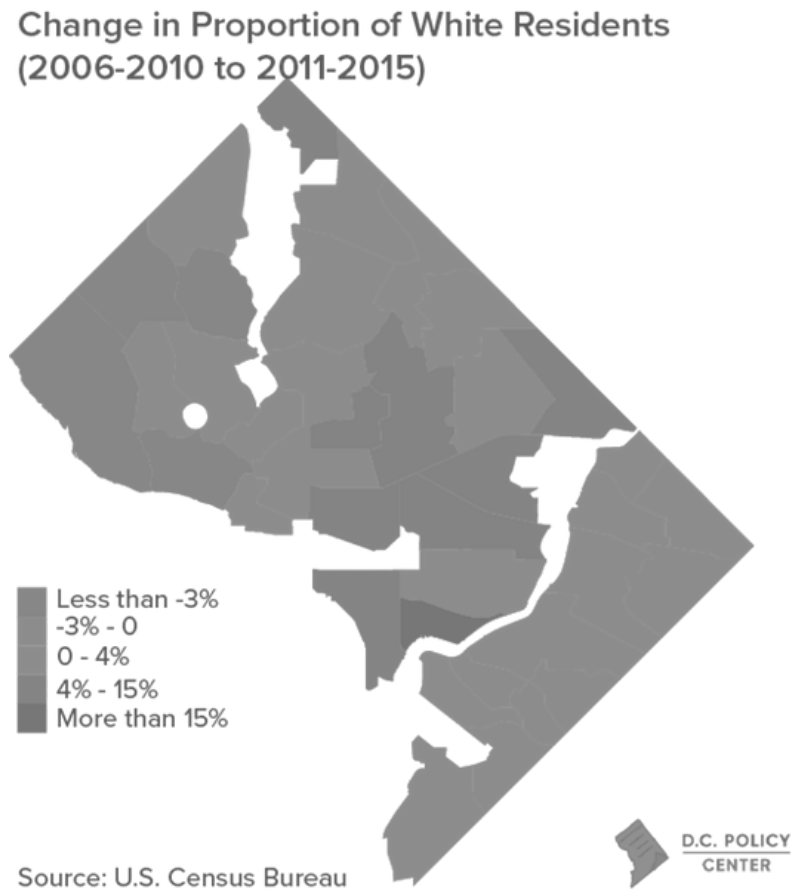
<sup>37</sup> Rob Walker, “Washington DC's Go-Go Music Hits Back in Fight against Gentrification,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, December 14, 2019), last modified December 14, 2019, accessed November 15, 2020,

<sup>38</sup> Rob Walker, “Washington DC's Go-Go Music Hits Back in Fight against Gentrification,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, December 14, 2019), last modified December 14, 2019, accessed November 15, 2020,

<sup>39</sup> National Park Service, Washington Navy Yard Nomination Form, Washington Navy Yard Nomination Form (Washington, District of Columbia: National Register of Historic Places, 1973), Pp. 13

<sup>40</sup> National Park Service, Washington Navy Yard Nomination Form, Washington Navy Yard Nomination Form (Washington, District of Columbia: National Register of Historic Places, 1973), pp. 13

operations during the Civil war and continued serving industrial uses in the decades after, most notably in the mass production of large fire arms<sup>41</sup>. The Navy Yards only started to experience decline in the years following World War II as the Navy relied more on aircraft carriers and submarines, and less on Naval vessels.<sup>42</sup>



*Figure 8 Change in Proportion of White Residents...,  
(Source: D.C. Policy Center; U.S. Census Bureau)*

<sup>41</sup> National Park Service, Washington Navy Yard Nomination Form, Washington Navy Yard Nomination Form (Washington, District of Columbia: National Register of Historic Places, 1973), pp. 16

<sup>42</sup> National Park Service, Washington Navy Yard Nomination Form, Washington Navy Yard Nomination Form (Washington, District of Columbia: National Register of Historic Places, 1973), pp. 17

In typical fashion of redevelopment propaganda the Capitol Riverfront Bid, a place management organization, is centred on its mission to ensure “clean, safe, accessible, unique, and friendly” neighborhood environments.<sup>43</sup> As it exists today, the Navy Yards embodies the ultimate river front development experience complete with high end dining, luxury apartment and condominiums, first class hospitality, premiere office spaces, and countless recreational and tourist attractions<sup>44</sup> It comes as no surprise that a large influx of white residents makeup one of the fastest growing neighborhoods in the District. A ten year household income study conducted by the Census Bureau determined that the Navy Yards were among the neighborhoods to witness a significant leap in the proportion of its residents with an annual household income on \$100k+ as well as an increase of residents between the ages of 22-34.<sup>45</sup>

While this site has seen drastic changes since its early years as a Naval shipyard, and exemplifies gentrification in the sense that an influx of resources that were previously non-existent to the neighborhood, development could mean risk for adjacent sites. While this project specifically has not displaced existing communities within the immediate boundaries of the Navy Yards, the growth of the neighborhood and attraction of retail and residential developments may continue to grow and eventually displace vulnerable residents.

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<sup>43</sup> Capitol Riverfront BID. “What We Do: Capitol Riverfront BID: Washington DC.” *Capitol Riverfront BID*. Accessed December 14, 2020. <https://www.capitolriverfront.org/about/about-the-bid/what-we-do>.

<sup>44</sup> The Yards. Accessed December 14, 2020. <https://www.theyardsdc.com/>.

<sup>45</sup> Rabinowitz, Kate. “A Decade of Demographic Change in D.C.: Which Neighborhoods Have Changed the Most?” D.C. Policy Center. Last modified November 27, 2017. Accessed May 19, 2021. <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/demographic-change-d-c-neighborhoods/>.

### *The Wharf, Washington D.C.*



*Figure 9 The Wharf Waterfront (Source: Ted Eyton)*

One of the most recent waterfront developments to emerge in Washington D.C. is none other than the Wharf. Its own history with urban renewal and complicity in the displacement of marginalized communities makes this case study particularly interesting. Prior to redevelopment the construction of the Waterside Mall as proposed by the Redevelopment Land Agency infringed upon, and hurt, an existing vibrant commercial corridor on 4th Street SW that helped patronize small, local businesses<sup>46</sup>. The target redevelopment area also exists less than a half-mile away from another urban renewal project, the Greenleaf Gardens public housing created under the D.C. Housing Authority, which, counter to the assumed outcomes of gentrification, housed a majority of Black residents. Said residents have engaged in the Wharf redevelopment Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process and voiced their

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<sup>46</sup> Nena Perry-Brown, "How Southwest's Waterside Mall, Waterfront Station, and the Wharf Connect with Displacement Fears for Greenleaf Public Housing Residents," *Greater Greater Washington*, last modified May 8, 2020, accessed November 15, 2020

concerns about maintaining the status of affordability, space for community events, and eligibility requirements among other fears associated with redevelopment<sup>47</sup>.

As the waterfront development became obsolete soon after the construction of the Waterside Mall, the District government invested nearly \$300 Million US dollars “in subsidies and expenditures to support the Wharf,” not to mention significant contributions from the private end of this public-private endeavor<sup>48</sup>.

In contrast to this and the aforementioned case studies, the highly anticipated 11th Street Bridge elevated park development is working against this pattern of development by working with the community to create an equitable and mutually beneficial piece of public infrastructure shared between wards 6 and 8.

#### *11th St Bridge Bridge Park Development*



*Figure 10 11th Street Bridge Rendering  
(Source: BBAR Equitable Development Plan)*

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<sup>47</sup> Flora Lindsey-Herrera, “PDF” (Washington, D.C., February 14, 2019).pp 11

<sup>48</sup> Flora Lindsey-Herrera, “PDF” (Washington, D.C., February 14, 2019).pp 11

Speaking to the marginalization of this community, systemic racism has definitely had a role in the socioeconomic disadvantages of black and brown communities across the country, but the river and 11th Street Bridge have also been instrumentalized in the marginalisation of Ward 8 from the rest of DC.

### *11th St Bridge Park Plan*

The bridge park is an initiative started by Building Bridges Across the River (BBAR), a 501(c)(3) organization, with the intention to transform the 11th st bridge into an elevated park seamlessly terminating at the Anacostia Riverfront. Its primary purpose is to serve as “an anchor for equitable and inclusive economic growth” complete with community driven programming meant to support the neighborhood’s physical, environmental, and public health”.<sup>49</sup> The park plans to feature outdoor performance spaces, playgrounds, urban agriculture and an environmental education center, not to mention river activity and outdoor recreation.

The notion of utilizing a structure created to connect space amplifies the poetic justice of the park as a destination and convener of disparate communities. While the park plan appears hopeful and promising, however, some remain apprehensive given the rapid rate of gentrification throughout D.C.; as discussed with the Navy Yard case study mentioned in Chapter 2.

### *Bridge Park Architecture*

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<sup>49</sup>Toledo, Daniela. “11th Street Bridge Park’s Equitable Development Plan.” Urban Waters Learning Network. Building Bridges Across Rivers (BBAR), March 18, 2019. Last modified March 18, 2019. Accessed October 10, 2020. Pp. 7

OMA and OLIN's competition winning design for the Bridge Park project proposed to use the existing piers of the Anacostia Freeway, which once severed Ward 8 from the riverfront and the rest of the city. The concept of connecting both sides of the river is communicated through two paths converging in a recognizable "X" formation; signifying the iconography of this project bringing communities together.

As the bridge spans towards the heart of Anacostia, the design "builds upon and connects to the existing Anacostia River Walk Trails," bringing with it programmatic elements to engage the East of the River as well as the river itself. The sequence through the bridge is organized as a series of voids with unique connections, and vantage points, to the river. At the center of it all, an Environmental Education Center meant to catalyze improving the ecological health of the Anacostia river by providing education opportunities for visitors and students alike.

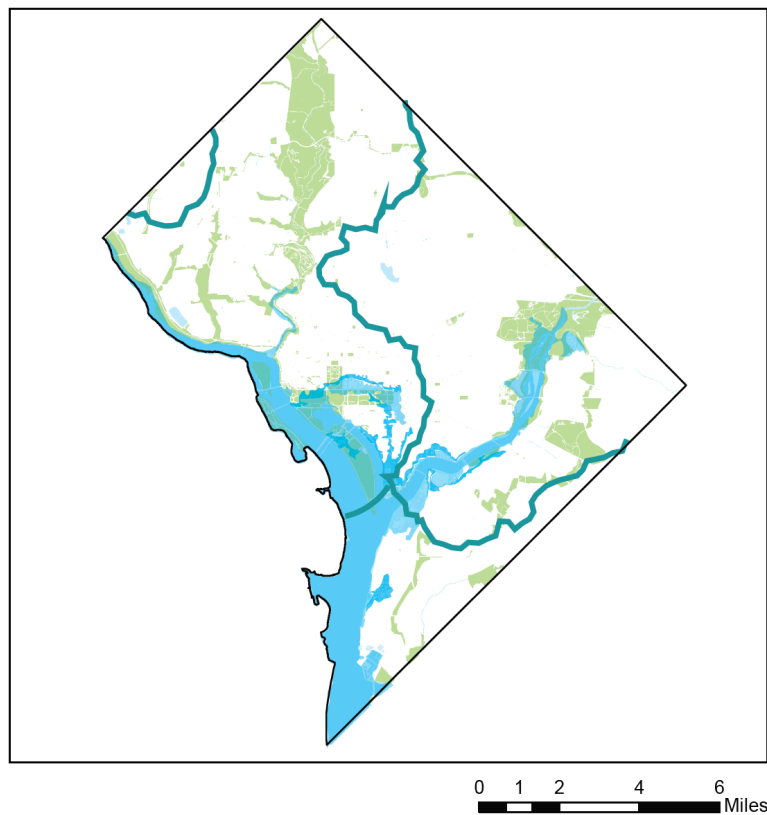
As this project continues to unfold, other prospective developments and plans are currently happening throughout the ward. As several stakeholders with varying interests and motivations come into Anacostia, it's understandable why some may be apprehensive or sensitive to change.



## Chapter 4: Site Selection & analysis

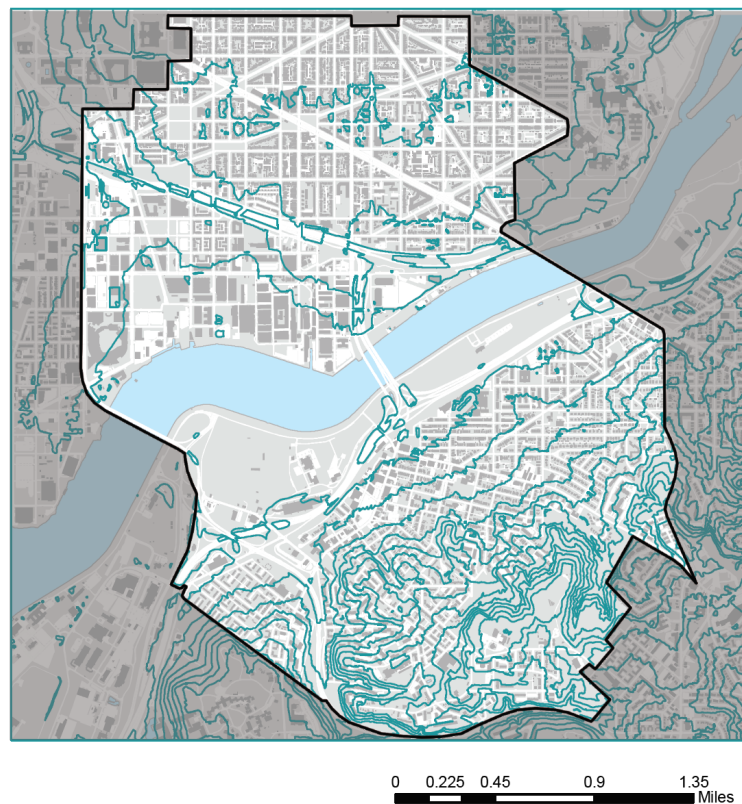
My choice to explore this thesis within the context of Anacostia as opposed to the case studies aforementioned in chapter 2 boil down to Anacostia's precarious position at the precipice of a major riverfront development project, the Historic marginalization and vulnerability of this community as it has yet to face consequences of development, and the abundance of opportunities to bolster the community Beyond The Bridge Park plan.

### *Site background of Anacostia*



*Figure 11 Washington, D.C. Natural Systems Diagram (Source: Author)*

While I briefly discussed the instrumentalization of the Anacostia River as a barrier utilized in the cyphoning of Ward 8 from the rest of the capital, the river has the inherent potential to be a connector and shared resource between its East and West banks. This proves one of the strongest aspects of the 11th St Bridge park proposal. In truth the river is historically a tremendous resource, shares a synonymous relationship with the creation of the Nation's Capital city, and has a wealth of biodiversity and natural resources.



*Figure 12 Site Zoom Topography Study (source: Author)*

As opposed to the relatively consistent elevation of Ward 6 upon approach the riverfront, The Anacostia neighborhood proves fairly hilly. While journeying through the neighborhood may feel like a trek at times, the views looking out to the river prove an advantageous aspect of the topographically challenged site. Preserving views and sightlines have been almost as challenging as preserving the historic and heritage buildings due to the rampant developments happening around the neighborhood.

### *Site Selection & Criteria*

As I searched for potential sites I considered various criteria to maximize the impact and significance of Affirming Identity. Along with proximity to sites and institutions of historic and cultural significance I also took into account proximity to public transportation, as the neighborhood exists within the WMATA network and would benefit from its regular foot traffic and exposure. Along with metro access, choosing a site along a main traffic corridor could prove beneficial in promoting public activity and cultivating a pedestrian oriented infrastructure to support future development. In finalizing the criteria I referred to the EDP to ensure Affirming Identity would work tangentially to the mission of the Bridge Park Development. A key aspect of the EDP includes growing business and employment opportunities to the immediate community, so I made a point to assess proximate small businesses as well as the potential to attract entrepreneurial endeavors of the greater Anacostia region.



*Figure 13a Prospective Site: Good Hope Rd & 13th St. (Source: Google maps and Author)*

One of the first sites I considered was the vacant lot next to the Department of Housing and Community Development on Good Hope Rd. & 13th St., its approach directly following the 11th Street Bridge. This site captured my attention almost immediately as it would proceed the 11th St Bridge Park development, is in fairly close proximity to the riverfront, and resides within a highly visible and significant corridor. Upon further observation from visiting the site, the open lot sits exactly across the Anacostia performing arts center among other local businesses and public service buildings; not to mention sharing the same street as the iconographic neon Anacostia sign. As this corridor proved advantageous in the aforementioned aspects, the potential to catalyze development appeared to be less impactful as the Bridge Park would compound onto the already active thoroughfare.



*Figure 13b Prospective Site: Martin Luther King Jr SE & Malcolm X Ave SE  
(Source: Google maps and Author)*

I then ventured out further away from the River Front to a site almost devoid of any cultural and community based programming, namely: the intersection at Martin Luther King Jr SE & Malcolm X Ave SE. I became drawn to this area by the expressed need of the community as well as its reputation. This intersection, however, is a highly utilized and heavy traffic area complete with utility buildings, liquor stores, and chain restaurants. The physical character of the site also proves heavily hardscape, so the opportunity to introduce an open green space also attracted me to potentially choosing this site. I remained a bit apprehensive as the site, while not terribly far, has distance from the Bridge Park development.





*Figure 13c Martin Luthner King JR SE & Howard Rd SE; (Source: Google maps)*

Finally I travelled to find some middle ground and clandestinely stumbled into the site I would ultimately choose; a site somewhere within the intersection of Martin Luthner King JR SE & Howard Rd SE, which already has such an advantage being in almost immediate proximity to the Anacostia Metro. Within the site there are two sites that appear equally advantageous and proved difficult to choose between. The first sub-site currently serves as an open-air, gravel parking lot that sits across from the Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter High School. This institution is particularly significant as it was one of the first educational institutions that served the community of freed slaves that had settled in the adjacent site post the Civil War. Numerous places of worship and establishments, namely the United Negro Fund, that are key cultural staples as part of the community's heritage.

The following site is the very development purchased and settled by the community of freed slaves that, as of 2018, has been torn down and currently awaits Redevelopment by the government.

CRITERIA	SITE A - GOOD HOPE RD SE & 13TH ST SE, WASHINGTON D.C.	SITE B - MARTIN LUTHER JR AVE SE & HOWARD RD SE, WASHINGTON D.C.	SITE C - MARTIN LUTHER JR AVE SE & MALCOM X AVE SE, WASHINGTON D.C.
 PUBLIC TRANSPORT / MAJOR ROAD ACCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 0.6 miles from Anacostia metro station</li> <li>- Most proximate site to Anacostia Riverfront and 11th st bridge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 0.1 miles from Anacostia metro station</li> <li>- 0.8 miles from Anacostia riverfront</li> <li>- On Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE corridor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exclusively car and bus access within 1 mile radius</li> <li>- 2.3 miles from Anacostia river front</li> <li>- On Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE and Malcome X Ave SE thoroughfare</li> </ul>
 PROXIMITY TO INSTITUTIONS / CULTURE / HISTORY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shares street with Anacostia Arts Center preparatory academy, and Nicholas avenue school</li> <li>- Equidistant to Site B to Frederick Douglass historic site and respective community center / housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Across from the Thurgood Marshall Academy public school, Savoy elementary school, community college preparatory academy, and Nicholas avenue school</li> <li>- Within 1 mile radius of America's Islamic Heritage museum and 3 churches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Within 1 mile of 2 elementary schools, a charter school, and high school</li> <li>- Lacking in culturally oriented buildings / space</li> </ul>
 POTENTIAL FOR COMMUNITY GROWTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established community anchors residing within 1 mile radius of site; limited lots available to develop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On open lot used as gravel parking lot</li> <li>- Adjacent to Barry farm neighborhood demolition (significant post-civil-war settlement for freed blacks)</li> <li>- Large, open unassigned land south of demolition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited open space =&gt; would have to demolish some of the existing conditions</li> <li>- Located on major roads, may catalyze redevelopment</li> </ul>
 PROXIMITY TO LOCAL BUSINESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shares street (Good Hope Rd SE) with residential, commercial, cultural, and service development</li> <li>- Local restaurants and grocery stores on adjacent lots</li> <li>- Most proximate to cultural landmarks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Within 1 mile radius of major services: Natl Association-Black social workers, daycare center,</li> <li>- Large, open unassigned land south of demolition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adjacent lots house chain restaurants, liquor stores, and utility buildings</li> <li>- Lack of bike access pedestrian</li> <li>- Large, open unassigned land south of demolition</li> </ul>
 PROXIMITY TO NEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pedestrian infrastructure proves lacking =&gt; opportunity to introduce tactical urban interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Master Planning intervention opportunity for recently demolished Barry Farm community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited cultural, educational, historic, and civic institutions</li> </ul>
 VISIBILITY ALONG PRIMARY CORRIDORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly visible off 11th St Bridge approach</li> <li>- Major vehicle and pedestrian traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Located along Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE corridor</li> <li>- Within 2 mile radius of main thoroughfare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly visible: Located along Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE X Malcom X Ave intersection</li> </ul>

Figure 14 Site Selection Matrix (Source: Author)

### *Sites of significance*

As enumerated in Chapter 1, numerous places and landmarks bear special significance to its culture and Heritage throughout the Anacostia Neighborhood. The main attractions that come to mind when thinking about Ward 8 include the Frederick Douglass house, the iconographic big chair sited along the main thoroughfare of the neighborhood, and the African American heritage trail.

### *St Elizabeth's Psychiatric Hospital*



*Figure 15 St. Elizabeth's Psychiatric Hospital (Source: National Archives)*

One of the first institutions introduced to Anacostia, the first Federally-funded hospital for the insane in the country, exists as none other than St Elizabeth's Psychiatric Hospital<sup>50</sup>. Congress established the institution at the crest of a 350-acre pasture overlooking the River in 1852 as social reform efforts to create humane environments to treat the mentally ill through-out the District of Columbia.<sup>51</sup> Among the most notable contributors of this movement were physician and founder of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane,

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<sup>50</sup>National Parks Service. "St. Elizabeths Hospital (U.S. National Park Service)." National Parks Service. U.S. Department of the Interior, November 2, 2020. Last modified November 2, 2020. Accessed December 14, 2020. <https://www.nps.gov/places/st-elizabeths-hospital.htm>. Source: Otto, Thomas. St. Elizabeths Hospital: A History. United States General Services Administration, 2013.

<sup>51</sup> National Parks Service. "St. Elizabeths Hospital (U.S. National Park Service)." National Parks Service. U.S. Department of the Interior, November 2, 2020. Last modified November 2, 2020. Accessed December 14, 2020.



Thomas Kirkbride, and mental health advocate, Dorothea Dix<sup>52</sup>. Dix's lobbying and advocacy, as well as Kirkbride's philosophies for patient care, combined with the planning and design of the then Architect of the Capitol, Thomas U. Walter, brought about a revolutionary medical institution that would set a precedent for the rest of the nation. The self-sustaining aspects of the institution, namely the surrounding farmland used for occupational therapy and the cultivation of crops, as well as its mission to serve patients of all races proved the most progressive aspects of this type of institution<sup>53</sup>.



*Figure 16 St. Elizabeth's Dry Barn in the 1890s,  
(Source: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare)*

The practice of farming at St. Elizabeth had been an integral aspect of the campus until all related activities ceased in 1965. While in its early years the hospital

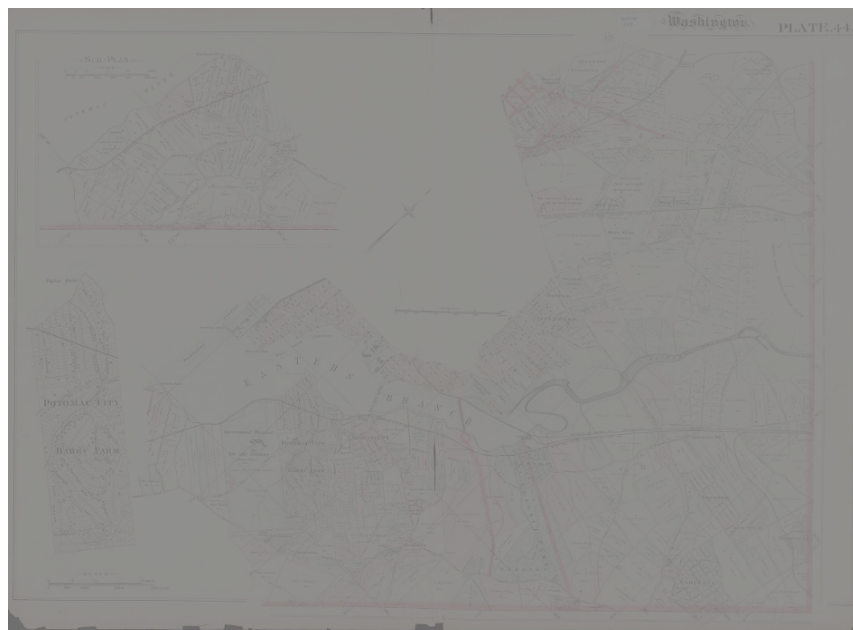
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<sup>52</sup> Penn Medicine. "Historical Timeline - Dr. Thomas Story Kirkbride." Pennsylvania Hospital History. Penn Medicine, n.d. Accessed December 14, 2020. <https://www.uphs.upenn.edu/paharc/timeline/1801/tline14.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Penn Medicine. "Historical Timeline - Dr. Thomas Story Kirkbride." Pennsylvania Hospital History. Penn Medicine, n.d. Accessed December 14, 2020.

campus appeared more like a farm as it had extensive cropland, gardens, and livestock<sup>54</sup>.

While the institution sustained forward thinking ideas and prevailed on the cutting edge of new medical practices it was not without its own flaws. The very deliberate intention in locating the hospital in the undeveloped and almost isolated land beyond the Anacostia river speaks volumes about how those existing outside of the norms of society should live: on the margins of society. Out of sight, out of mind.



*Figure 17 Early Barry Farm Plot Map (Source: Library of Congress, Division of Maps)*

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<sup>54</sup>Thomas J Otto, *St. Elizabeth's Hospital A History* , *St. Elizabeth's Hospital A History* (Capital Region, DC: United States Government, 2013), pp. 17-56.

*Barry Farms: A Freedman's village*

After determining sites to explore this thesis, I ultimately decided on the former Barry Farm public housing site within Anacostia, D.C. as it has a richly layered cultural and historical significance as well as its recent demolition and plans for redevelopment that could contribute to the discussion of gentrification and displacement in our current social climate.

The Barry Farm estate was a section of land within the St. Elizabeth's tract purchased by Washington City merchant and councilman James Barry as an investment as the city expanded eastward<sup>55</sup>. As it remained fairly isolated from the rest of the city, the Freedmen's Bureau -- an organization composed of the Federal Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands purchased the Barry property to house 20,000 slave refugees who arrived during the Civil War<sup>56</sup>. As the white community established within the Navy Yards admonished the potential settlement of the Freedman community nearby, covert negotiations with the Navy Yard officials resulted in the acquisition of the Barry property, which was densely forested and topographically challenging<sup>57</sup>.

Despite this, the black community continued to grow there, coming together to clear land for growing food and cultivating livestock. Later down the line residents,

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<sup>55</sup> Sarah Shoenfeld, "The History and Evolution of Anacostia's Barry Farm," D.C. Policy Center, last modified August 21, 2020, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/barry-farm-anacostia-history/>, A Freedmans Village....

<sup>56</sup> Sarah Shoenfeld, "The History and Evolution of Anacostia's Barry Farm," D.C. Policy Center, last modified August 21, 2020, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/barry-farm-anacostia-history/>, A Freedmans Village....

<sup>57</sup> Sarah Shoenfeld, "The History and Evolution of Anacostia's Barry Farm," D.C. Policy Center, last modified August 21, 2020, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/barry-farm-anacostia-history/>, A Freedmans Village....

with the help of the Freedmen's bureau, would fundraise to build a school; within the next two years an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and Baptist church would make its way into the community<sup>58</sup>.

The decades following the Great Depression proved especially challenging for African Americans living in D.C. as urban renewal projects wrought mass displacement, tenants lacked access to basic amenities for day to day survival, and housing and welfare benefits were increasingly withheld<sup>59</sup>. The 1960s were especially proactive times for the community as its residents began to organize and rally against the neglect wrought onto the community by the National Capitol Housing Authority.



*Figure 18a-18b Early Public Housing Community Views (source:National Archives)*

The public housing created there proved unique in certain spatial liberties taken, namely the expansive spaces between residences that allowed for recreation

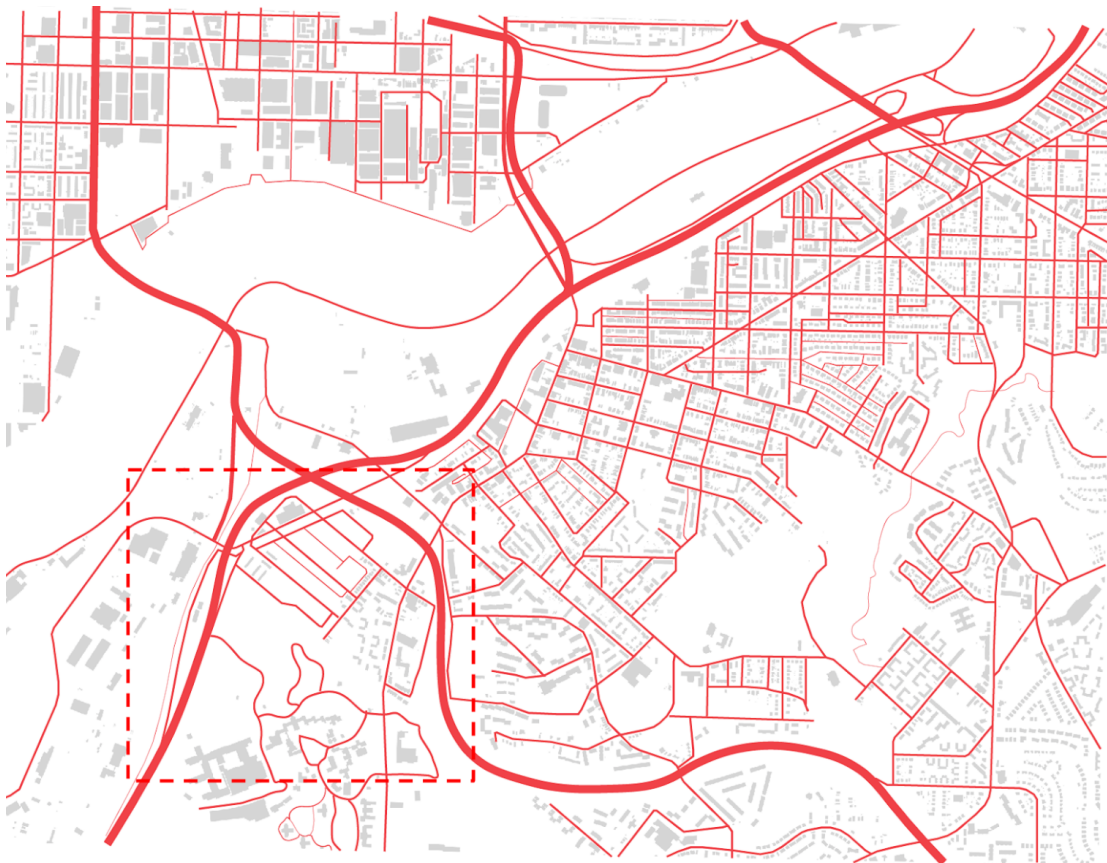
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<sup>58</sup>Sarah Shoenfeld, "The History and Evolution of Anacostia's Barry Farm," D.C. Policy Center, last modified August 21, 2020, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/barry-farm-anacostia-history/>, A Freedmans Village....

<sup>59</sup> Sarah Shoenfeld, "The History and Evolution of Anacostia's Barry Farm," D.C. Policy Center, last modified August 21, 2020, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/barry-farm-anacostia-history/>. Public Housing...

and the filtration of air and light, terraces to allow views out to the river, and generous living space that was unheard of for black housing.<sup>60</sup>

Zooming back out to the greater context of anacostia, its vehicular network, while serviceable to most of the residences, creates a distinct boundary that syphons the Barry Farm community from the rest of the neighborhood. This was an intentional effort as the construction of the Suitland Parkway in 1943 was instrumental in further isolating the Barry Farm public housing from the rest of ward 8, displacing about 112 families in its wake.



*Figure 19a Street Network Diagram (source: Author)*

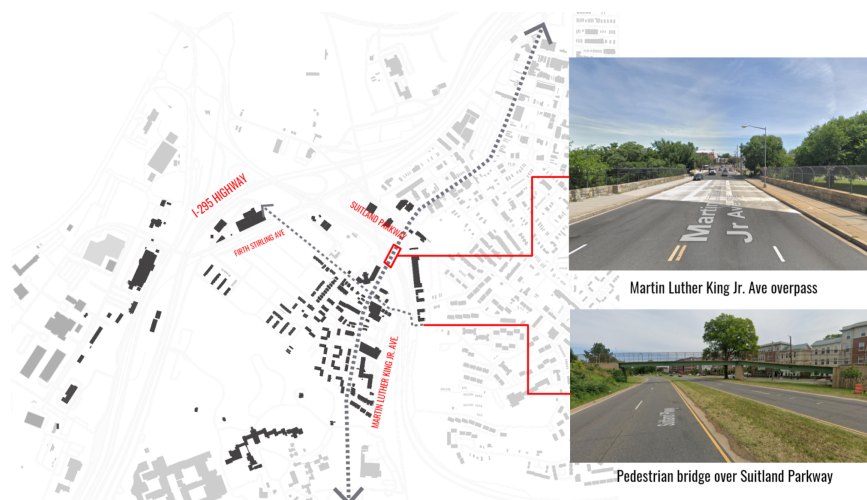
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<sup>60</sup> Story map



Figure 20a Neighborhood Barriers Diagram (source: Author)

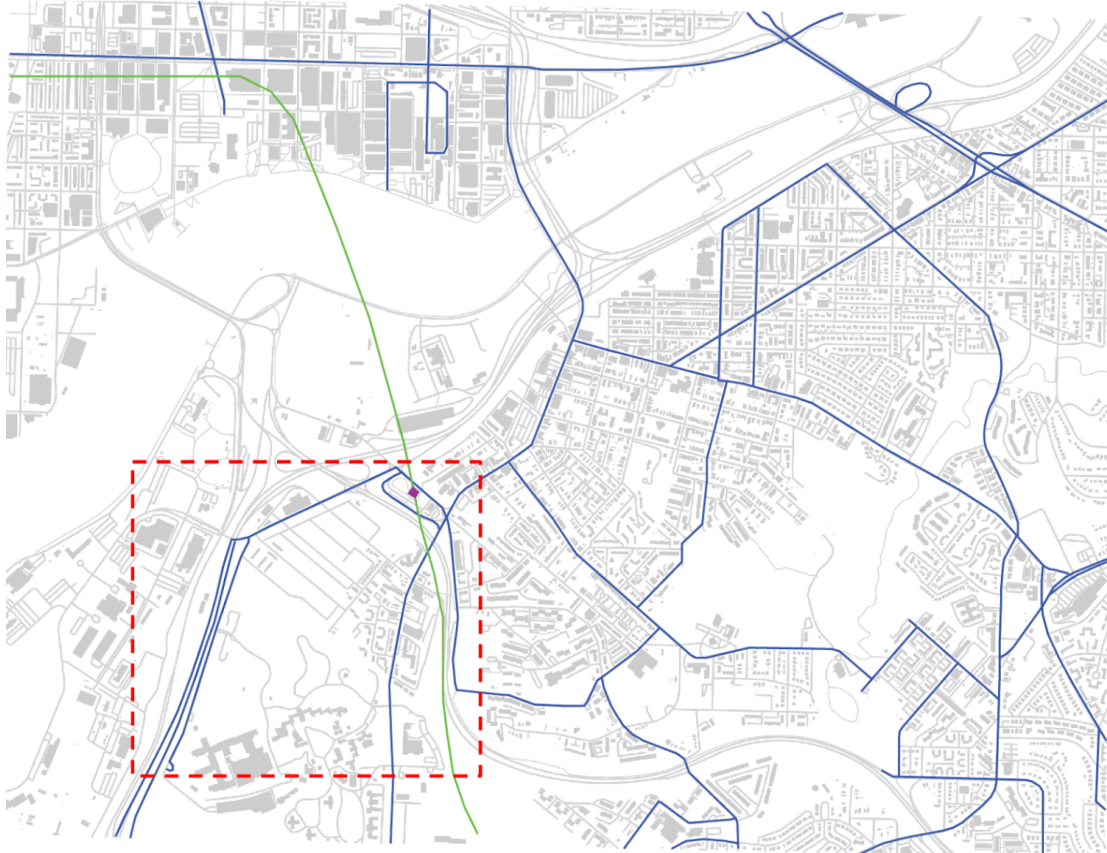
This leads me to my next observation of the barriers and bridges present in the immediate site. The primary barriers insulating the Barry Farms site include the Suitland parkway as aforementioned, the walling and fencing surrounding the designated industrial and naval base zones, and the fortress-like walls surrounding the St. Elizabeth's Campus. The perimeter wall around St. Elizabeth's Primary access occurs through Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue and a pedestrian bridge east of the site.





*Figure 20b Neighborhood Access Diagram (source: Author)*

A saving grace of this site is its accessibility by way of public transportation. While the metro is less than a mile away, the pedestrian experience towards it is not the most comfortable.



*Figure 19b Public Transportation Diagram (source: Author)*

The Anacostia neighborhood overall has such an abundance of landmarks, outdoor recreation, cultural buildings, and institutions including numerous historic churches that were foundational to the emergence of this community.



*Figure 19c Building Use (source: Author)*

Looking more closely at the Barry farm site, upon entering the main corridor of Martin Luther King Jr. Ave, you immediately interface with the Excel Academy which shares the intersection with the Campbell AME & the Matthew Memorial Baptist Churches. Proceeding west of the school is the Barry Farm Recreation Center which housed the first city playground for African Americans and was the first location to debut go-go, which is the unofficial music of D.C.



## Chapter 4: Affirming Identity, Honoring Heritage

### *Theoretical Framework: Place and Memory*

The title of this thesis, *Affirming Identity*, emerged from the understanding of Anacostia as a place with an unacknowledged and suppressed history in the greater context of Washington D.C. This reigns especially true of the Barry Farms site as evidenced by the current razed status of the land that once housed a community actively barred off from the society. The notion of heritage, honoring place, and celebrating Identity proved the next point of departure in the creation of a place within space that holds embedded history and culture. I consulted various theoretical texts to develop a framework toward the memorialization of heritage and preserving history to establish the foundational tenets of design used in *Affirming Identity*.

As mentioned in chapters prior, Barry Farms has experienced numerous eras from its origin as a densely forested and topographically challenged land adjacent to the St. Elizabeth's Psychiatric Hospital, to an agricultural haven to a community of freed slaves, and most recently a government owned affordable housing community for African Americans during housing segregation before its recent demolition in 2019. Witnessing the space in its current state evokes a sense of loss of place, and while this is nothing new to the site, it calls into question the approach taken in the formation of the new place that replaces the former.

I was first introduced to the notion of replacement by an excerpt thus titled by author and architect WG Clark in which he discusses architecture as a means to atone

for the loss of landscape or previously occupied space. Clark goes onto acknowledge humanity as being harmful and imposing to Earth as our existence proves demanding and exhaustive of its resources, as well as our own subconscious awareness of this fact that drives our need to atone or “assuage the fouling and killing aspects of our existence in order to simply be at some ease with our occupation.”<sup>61</sup> This births the idea of economy; the governing idea that what we consume or use is justified if it proves necessary to our existence and not abused or enjoyed in excess. As we consider the earliest civilizations and the role of agriculture and proximity to water in sustaining them, this occupation of nature speaks to a consideration of economy that has long since been lost with exponential population growth, consumerism, and urban development. Evaluating the history of this country, specifically Washington D.C., evidences a progressive corruption of economy as colonization has resulted in the removal of a native civilization more closely aligned with nature, and overharvesting of the earth to the extent in which the physical transformation of the Anacostia River itself has not yet recovered. Zooming in further to the trajectory of Barry farm, its first act of replacement, so to speak, as the Freedmen's community demonstrates the sacrifice of wilderness to create refuge for a people, abused within their own condition of humanity, in what I surmise Clark would determine as accomplishing the difficult task of assuaging the loss of place. It is at this juncture of occupation in which space and culture coalesce to establish a new place.

Before continuing this discussion any further, identifying and defining terms such as space, place, and dwelling prove imperative to understanding the nuanced

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<sup>61</sup> W G Clark, “Replacement,” Section Cut (Section Cut, March 1, 2020), last modified March 1, 2020, accessed December 12, 2020, <https://www.sectioncut.com/collection/replacement-by-w-g-clark/>.

approach toward heritage and placemaking as it relates to the formation of the design approach taken by this thesis. Norman Crowe, teacher and practitioner of architecture, introduces the “sense of place” as the natural proclivity of man; “something we all recognize...a familiar landscape, a refuge from the unknown”<sup>62</sup>. He continues to mention that we experience places holistically for its tangible and intangible aspects, particularly the meditation of our lived experience attaching culturally determined feeling and provincial meaning<sup>63</sup>. From this relationship between occupied space and culture emerges a stamp or signature of existence that place is founded. Similarly John Bickerhoff Jackson, author of *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time* defines sense of place as “something we create ourselves within the course of time. It is the result of habit or custom.”<sup>64</sup> The latter statement reflects the example of Egyptian civilization Crowe mentions in his text, and how their world experience proved predictable given the accuracy of their calendar, allowing them to prosper as a civilization given the respective advantages of predicting harvesting cycles and annual flooding. One might imagine the sense of place of Barry Farm in its formative years as being associated with the events of early emancipation and the rocky footing recently freed slaves had in society. While facing severe marginalization and continual resistance, the occupation within a land disconnected from mainstream society maintained some semblance of community, hope and freedom that had previously not been afforded. The abundance of lot space allowed for the cultivation of gardens and livestock, as well as the ability to grow food to help sustain this micro-civilization. The collective

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<sup>62</sup> Crowe, Norman. *Nature and the Idea of a Man-Made World : An Investigation into the Evolutionary Roots of Form and Order in the Built Environment*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995.

<sup>63</sup> Crowe, Norman. *Nature and the Idea of a Man-Made World : An Investigation into the Evolutionary Roots of Form and Order in the Built Environment*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995. Pp 73

<sup>64</sup> Jackson, John Brinckerhoff. *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994. Pp 151

work of residents and the freedmen's Bureau in fundraising to create some of its founding institutions, namely a school, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church, as well as other baptist churches<sup>65</sup> add dimensionality in the understanding of place and dwelling at Barry Farm during this time.



*Figure 21a, Barry Farm as Wilderness (Source: Library of Congress, Division of Maps)*



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<sup>65</sup> Shoenfeld, Sarah. "The History and Evolution of Anacostia's Barry Farm." D.C. Policy Center. D.C. Policy Center, August 21, 2020. Last modified August 21, 2020. Accessed December 13, 2020. <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/barry-farm-anacostia-history/>.

Figure 21b, Barry Farm 354-Acre Tract Plot Map (Source: Library of Congress, Division of Maps)

The notion of dwelling, as presented in, German Philosopher and Phenomenologist, Martin Heidegger's chapter on "Building Dwelling & Thinking" may be defined as the "manner in which mortals are on the earth."<sup>66</sup> German philosopher Karsten Harries further articulates Martin's meaning of "dwelling genuinely" by underscoring the etymology of the German word *bauen*, a verb encompassing dwelling as being at home in the world, as well as distinguishing dwelling from the mere act of residing; "inhabiting a structure or finding shelter."<sup>67</sup> Coincidentally Heidegger uses the example of the farmhouse which fits into its landscape and supports all facets of the farmer and his family's living, in which case the farm house may be interpreted as a built condition that is instrumental to the human condition of being. Thinking back to early life in Barry Farms, dwelling consisted of actively engaging with the community by communing in worship, participating in education and/or political change, as well as the cultivation of land.

In his own published work: *Ethical function of Architecture*, Harries touches upon the notion of space and place that offers particular resonance to the history of development lived through Barry Farms.

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<sup>66</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Poetry, Language, Thought. 1st ed. His Works. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. pp . 146

<sup>67</sup> Heidegger, Martin. Poetry, Language, Thought. 1st ed. His Works. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. pp . 154

*“The ease in which we relocate ourselves and replace buildings is witness to a more profound displacement that may be welcome as an aspect of humanity’s coming of age or deplored as a loss of genuine dwelling”<sup>68</sup>*

Proceeding the eventual replacement of the aforementioned community, the government created public housing for African Americans during the segregation era and buried some remnants of the place once found there while unintentionally maintaining some of its essence. While the housing design followed that of the typical low-rent housing typology that emerged during World War II, the layout retains the parallel street configuration of its prior settlement as well as generous outdoor space and connected pathways.<sup>69</sup> As this housing project was founded on a social imperative unique during its time, the agency made special provisions for the families living there including ample living space, easily accessible and shared yard space, and safe, private street network --more so resultant from existing infrastructure conditions than intentional design. Using the previously stated definitions of place and dwelling, the spirit of the Freedmen community dwelling is maintained through the preservation of open space as well as supporting the same demographic of marginalized people. The use of space for recreation, and the eventual development of the recreation center, compounds onto the existing anchors that contribute to the dwelling of the community and begins to ameliorate the sacrifice of preceding place to some extent.

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<sup>68</sup> Harries, Karsten. *The Ethical Function of Architecture*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997. Pp. 172

<sup>69</sup> Shoenfeld, Sarah. “The History and Evolution of Anacostia's Barry Farm.” D.C. Policy Center. D.C. Policy Center, August 21, 2020. Last modified August 21, 2020. Accessed December 13, 2020.



*Figure 22 Barry Farm Public Housing Uphill Streetview (source: Gottscho-Schleisner Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)*

The approach taken by this redevelopment reflects what Harries thoughts on the value of space, which proves paradoxical to the urbanization and gentrification of Washington D.C. and what he describes as an attack on place: the densification and gradual homogeneity that modernization produces<sup>70</sup>. Throughout his chapter “Space and Place,” Harries echoes the sentiments of Heidegger who often underscores the propensity of human nature toward controlling nature and their environment in his work. Similarly, Clark introduced the “Replacement” text with the statement “architecture...is the reconciliation of ourselves with the natural land,” which speaks volumes of our continuous struggle to exist and align with nature and the efficacy of doing so. His opinion by which we find liberation within space, thus asserting the power of place, exists in distance. In the case of the Barry Farms public housing, the use of space and distance is an honorific quality that should be acknowledged and maintained. Space in particular may also prove a key ingredient in preserving the heritage of the site.

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<sup>70</sup> Harries, Karsten. *The Ethical Function of Architecture*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997. Pp. 172

## *Heritage and preservation*

*Reconnecting the City : The Historic Urban Landscape Approach and the Future of Urban Heritage* begins to discuss the role of intangible and tangible values as they pertain to the interpretation, planning, and conservation of historic urban landscapes, particularly the importance of integrating the intangible at the forefront of community preservation<sup>71</sup>. The text goes on to describe intangible heritage, which encompasses the knowledge, skills, rituals, and activities preserved by the local community, as well as the tangible, including form, and the built and natural environment, as the two fundamental dimensions of Heritage.<sup>72</sup> As Clark argues the best architecture of replacement occurs “through an intensification of place...where culture’s shaping of the land to specific use results in a heightening of beauty and presence.”<sup>73</sup> To the site’s advantage, various critical aspects of its tangible heritage remain, namely the recreation center, the adjacent religious and academic institutions, as well as a small collection of residences, with thanks to the activism of the Barry Farm Tenants Association, set aside as a historic landmark. As the text also mentions the converse relationship between the tangible and intangible would indicate embodied intangible heritage within existing community anchors namely the practice of faith and associated rituals supported by religious institutions, and the active

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<sup>71</sup> *Reconnecting the City : The Historic Urban Landscape Approach and the Future of Urban Heritage*, edited by Francesco Bandarin, et al., John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umdc/detail.action?docID=1824195>.

<sup>72</sup> Bandarin, Francesco, van Oers, Ron, and Van Oers, Ron, eds. 2014. *Reconnecting the City : The Historic Urban Landscape Approach and the Future of Urban Heritage*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. Accessed December 12, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>73</sup> Clark, W G. “Replacement.” Section Cut. Section Cut, March 1, 2020. Last modified March 1, 2020. Accessed December 12, 2020. <https://www.sectioncut.com/collection/replacement-by-w-g-clark/>.



engagement in recreation and physical wellness experienced within the recreating center and surrounding open space.

As it exists today, the almost completely erased site awaits a government led redevelopment project that was conceived, and in the works, as early as 2013. The proposed redevelopment intervenes within the immediate boundaries of the previous public housing to create a “vibrant, mixed-use development for residents of various incomes”<sup>74</sup> The scheme presents a targeted focus on the preservation of public housing, affordability of for sale and rent properties, and the sustainable strategies following LEED protocol, which in practice are all great areas to address. While I agree with various aspects of the proposal, I believe Barry Farms has even greater potential to become not only a place people may genuinely dwell, but a place that celebrates and serves its greater context.

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<sup>74</sup>DC Housing Authority. “About the Redevelopment.” Barry Farm Redevelopment. Tech Tamer LLC, September 9, 2020. Last modified September 9, 2020. Accessed December 13, 2020. [http://barryfarmredevelopment.org/about\\_the\\_redevelopment-2/](http://barryfarmredevelopment.org/about_the_redevelopment-2/).

## PROGRAM ABSTRACT

The Anacostia Neighborhood in its entirety proves a culturally rich and underserved community that should be celebrated and supported by its built environment. Affirming Identity seeks to preserve the heritage and celebrate memory of the recently demolished Barry Farm site by presenting an alternative community development master planning strategy. The scheme proposes an elevated pedestrian bridge connecting the metro to the community to support community accessibility, a Heritage Center, park space to support dwelling and activity, prioritized housing for displaced inhabitants of Barry farm, and land for agricultural interventions. Given the site's proximity to the St. Elizabeth's campus, Affirming Identity also has the opportunity to further engage with the historical landscape and create connection between the disparate sites by way of a ceremonial nature trail.

As the heritage center will become a new community anchor layering onto the history and gradual progression of community anchors within and surrounding Barry Farm, the program of the heritage center proposes utilizing a variety of typological programming, including that of libraries, performing arts venues, heritage centers, and museums. More specifically, it will house spaces for public access to resources and information, formal and informal spaces for public gathering and celebration of culture, flexible working and collaborative spaces, and outdoor areas for leisure, recreation, and remembrance. The specific program includes multimedia and library

spaces, an auditorium, a restaurant supplied by the local produce, and a gallery to showcase the History of Barry Farm.

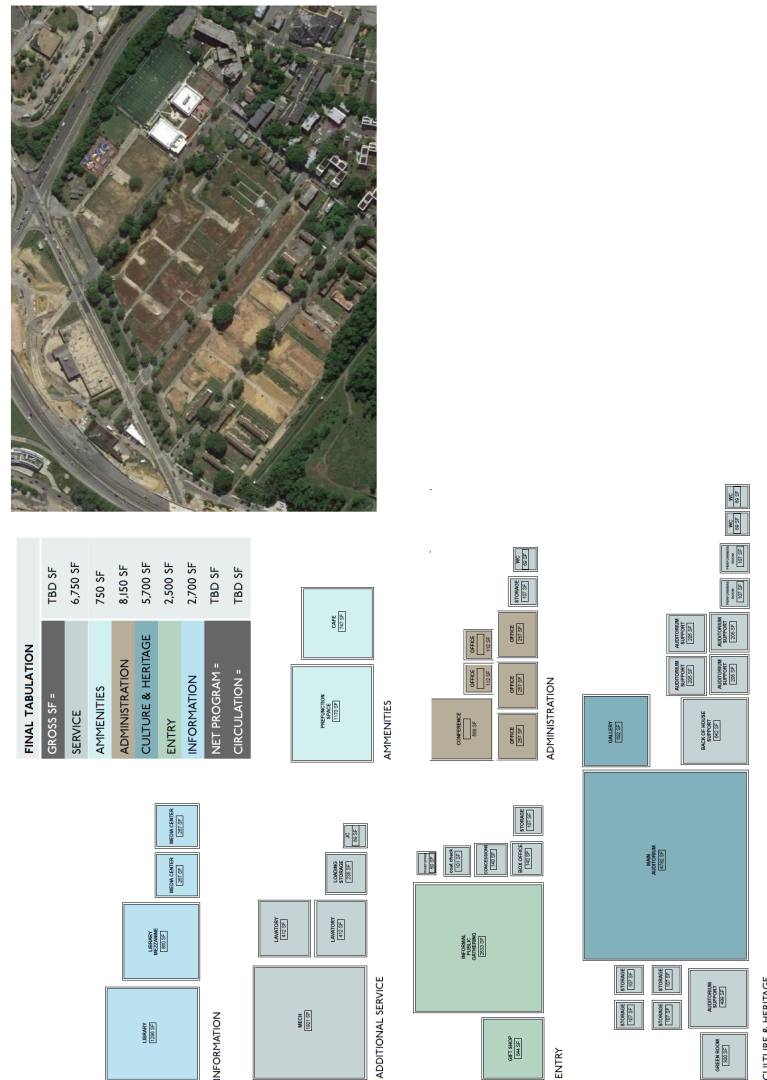
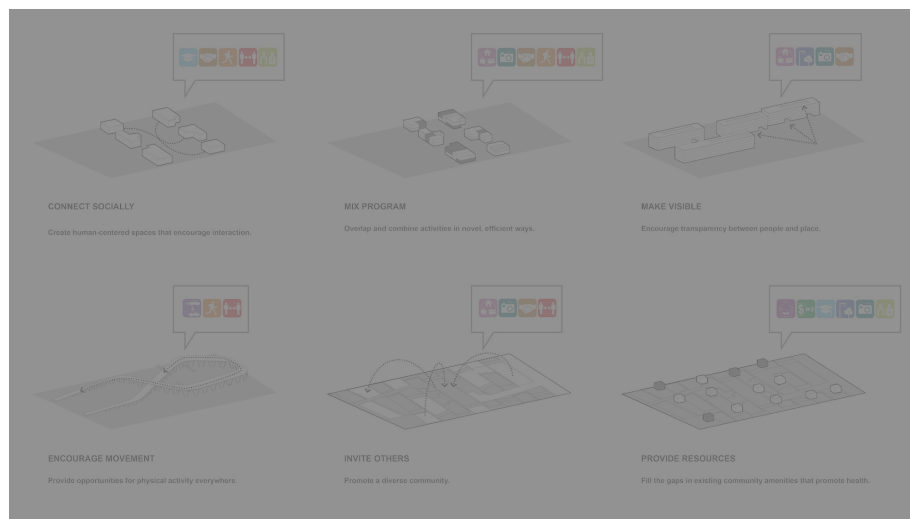


Figure 23 Affirming Identity Heritage Center Program Engineering (Source: Author)

## *Design Tenets*

In creating this proposal, developing key design tenants proves critical to achieving the vision of Affirming identity as an active community resource and dwelling destination that embodies equity. I consulted existing literature and design standards including the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standard, the Living Building Challenge (LBC), and Equitable Development Plan (EDP).



*Figure 24 Synergies in Design and Health (Source: ISA HealthX Design)*

## *The Equitable Development Plan*

The Equitable Development Plan (EDP) is an Anacostia community based development tool and planning process that began in 2015. When sitting down to

speaking with Irfana Jetha Noorani, the former Deputy director of the 11th st bridge park, she defined the EDP as a public sector project, contrary to surface level misunderstanding of it being a development plan. In its commitment to supporting the community, the BBAR has shifted its initial focus on addressing the infrastructure to looking at the needs of the community at a living level<sup>75</sup>. As a key figure in developing the plan, programming the bridge park, working with various organizations and stakeholders, and fundraising, Noorani has worked hard to maintain the EDP as a primarily mission based and community driven resource. She went on further to describe it as a planning tool from which the community could engage in their own advocacy. It uses a multi-sector approach to eliminate the silos that exist in community planning and the nonprofit world. The plan outlines its key components to safe housing equity: workforce development, supporting local small businesses, and affordable housing<sup>76</sup>.

The EDP outlines strategies for preserving, and expanding, affordable housing. This strategy requires working with city agencies and non-profit organizations, including the Douglass Community Land Trust (DCLT) to protect existing housing. As much of the designated land is removed from the speculative market, housing is able to remain affordable.

As a living document the EDP has gone through several passes, its most recent iteration features a cultural equity component that seeks to strengthen the place keeping aspect of the plan by amplifying the voices and narratives of the community.

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<sup>75</sup> First hand research (interview with Irfana Jetha Noorani)

<sup>76</sup> Toledo, Daniela. "11th Street Bridge Park's Equitable Development Plan." Urban Waters Learning Network. Building Bridges Across Rivers (BBAR), March 18, 2019. Last modified March 18, 2019. Accessed October 10, 2020. [https://www.urbanwaterslearningnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Equitable-Development-Plan\\_09.04.18\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.urbanwaterslearningnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Equitable-Development-Plan_09.04.18_compressed.pdf).

Coming from an arts background herself, Noorani and her team has worked with community leaders in the arts, as well as Building Community (BC) Workshop, to develop this component to ensure culture assessment remains at the same level as economic change.

While accessibility is required by all, if not most, standards by way of ADA code compliance, the notion of Universal design considers a more holistic, equitable stance in practice; “its purpose is to make spaces readily usable for as many people as possible.”<sup>77</sup> This not only refers to safeguarding the access of disabled persons, but ensuring the position of any built intervention as being a respectful neighbor to its surrounding context. The design should not compromise the access of sunlight and natural are two adjacent buildings as well as preserving views out to the Anacostia River.

One of the imperatives of the LBC is Beauty, which is intended to create uplifting and humane environments that have longevity.<sup>78</sup> As described by the LBC, beauty is something that appeals to our basic human nature, and oftentimes we fail to extend this consideration to the buildings, material ,and environments around us. As much of the proposed intervention considers that landscape, the existing arts presence within Anacostia is a contextual aspect that may also enhance the design of this micro intervention.

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<sup>77</sup> Melton, Paula. “Equity in Design and Construction: Seven Case Studies.” BuildingGreen. BuildingGreen, June 1, 2020. Last modified June 1, 2020. Accessed December 14, 2020. <https://www.buildinggreen.com/feature/equity-design-and-construction-seven-case-studies>.

<sup>78</sup> International Living Future Institute. “Living Building Challenge 4.0.” Seattle : International Living Future Institute, May 2019. [chrome-extension://ohfgljdgelakfkefopgklcohadegdpjf/https://living-future.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/LBC-4\\_0\\_v13.pdf](chrome-extension://ohfgljdgelakfkefopgklcohadegdpjf/https://living-future.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/LBC-4_0_v13.pdf)

An element both the LBC and LEED also consider is building with local materials. Doing so proves advantageous from a sustainability perspective as locally produced materials have a lesser embodied energy, with consideration of manufacturing, transporting, and distributing, and benefit local economies<sup>79</sup>. The production of materials also helps to preserve the heritage of a place and create opportunities to employ locally.

Another Petal of the LBC I found important to incorporate within the equitable design strategy of Affirming Identity is Nature. Access to Nature refers to engagement with natural environments to help stimulate the senses and uplift spirits. This also refers to the interior conditions of space as they relate to Daylight and natural ventilation.<sup>80</sup>

Lastly inclusive opportunity refers to the capacity to create opportunities to employ or provide resources to the immediate Community this also considers sourcing materials and obtaining labor fairly and humanely<sup>81</sup>.

### *Master Planning strategies*

After selecting, analyzing, and becoming familiar with the Barry Farms site, the current social climate and open condition for the site stood out to me as particularly advantageous. Factoring in the lens of equity, history and heritage, as

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<sup>79</sup> Malin, Nadav. "On Using Local Materials." BuildingGreen. BuildingGreen, August 28, 2014. Last modified August 28, 2014. Accessed December 14, 2020. <https://www.buildinggreen.com/feature/using-local-materials>.

<sup>80</sup> International Living Future Institute. "Living Building Challenge 4.0." Seattle : International Living Future Institute, May 2019. Pp. 47-49

<sup>81</sup> Malin, Nadav. "On Using Local Materials." *BuildingGreen*. BuildingGreen, August 28, 2014. Last modified August 28, 2014. Accessed December 14, 2020.

well as recognizing existing opportunities within the site, the approach to activate this place to serve the community and benefit its larger context by way of public health and celebrating identity became clear. As mentioned in the program abstract, the components of the alternative proposal set forth by this thesis include an overarching agrarian community development strategy to intensify the original spirit of the site as being an agricultural community.



*Figure 25 The Farm at Crossroad Commons in Merrillville, Indiana(source: HKS)*

Agrarian, as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is “of or relating to fields or lands or their tenure.”<sup>82</sup> As many ancient civilizations were agrarian communities, understanding their logic and planning strategies prove beneficial, particularly those settled in proximity to water. Considering the contemporary urban condition in which the site resides, I took to analyzing urban farm and integrated landscape community precedents as well. The Farm at Crossroad Commons

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<sup>82</sup> “Agrarian.” Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Accessed December 13, 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/agrarian>.



Merrillville, Indiana by HKS Architects is a “modern agri-destination [that] aspires to revitalize a community”<sup>83</sup> by creating an architectural intervention that interfaces the needs of the people with their historical agricultural landscape. Similar to the approach taken by this thesis, The Farm utilizes master planning to uncover the lost land, culture, and history of the Merrillville community and respond to the “the regional drivers of the area’s food desert, degraded hydrology, and need for community connectivity.”<sup>84</sup> The scheme presents a diverse range of agricultural interventions including areas for agricultural production and provision of livestock<sup>85</sup>, along with specific amenities created to support health and wellness, education, as well as arts and culture. As many of the needs of the community reflect that of the Anacostia neighborhood and bear a similar agrarian heritage, the strategies employed by this case study align with the mission and aspirations of affirming identity, making it an ideal precedent to reference.

Along with the creation of the Heritage Center, I harken back to the notion of distance as presented by W.G. Clark, in setting aside ample space to serve as a memorial park. As mentioned in the *Reconnecting the City...* text, the interpretation and manifestation of heritage remains subjective as the intangible dimension of heritage provides opportunities to evoke memory by utilizing elements that demonstrate an interrelationship between physical form, spatial organization,

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<sup>83</sup> HKS. “The Farm at Crossroad Commons: HKS Architects.” HKS Architects. HKS Architects, n.d. Accessed December 13, 2020.

<https://www.hksinc.com/what-we-do/case-studies/the-farm-at-crossroad-commons/>.

<sup>84</sup> HKS. “The Farm at Crossroad Commons: HKS Architects.” HKS Architects. HKS Architects, n.d. Accessed December 13, 2020.

<sup>85</sup> HKS. “The Farm at Crossroad Commons: HKS Architects.” HKS Architects. HKS Architects, n.d. Accessed December 13, 2020.

connection, and natural features with the social, cultural, and economic values.<sup>86</sup> The Memorial Park in this proposal not only becomes a commemorative space for honoring memory but is used for placemaking and supporting the activity and dwelling that recalls that of its past occupations. The location of the heritage center and memorial park would occur at the confluence of paths connected to the existing anchors and the proposed natural trail connecting the histories of the Barry Farm site with the St. Elizabeths campus.

The creation of a commemorative nature trail is a unique feature that speaks to the larger notion of acknowledging the shared history and of distancing communities not accepted by mainstream society, namely African Americans and the mentally ill, as well as breaking the physical and unseen barriers separating both sites to bridge the gaps in the history of Anacostia.

Speaking to the point of barriers, the creation of the Suitland Parkland evidences the intentional cyphoning of the Barry Farm community within Anacostia. The access to the local metro proves a bit limited as pedestrians would need bus or car transportation to arrive; if not, a time consuming and strenuous walk. As the metro passes through the periphery of the site, not far behind the Matthews Memorial Baptist Church, an alternative metro entrance may present the opportunity to enhance access to the site.

As the history of the site is largely residential, the proposal also re-introduces Affordable housing using a formal interpretation on the prior housing while aligning with the landscape by utilizing sustainable strategies. Where the DC Housing

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<sup>86</sup> Rojas, Cristobal. "Writers Theatre Opens New Theatre Center / Studio Gang." ArchDaily. ArchDaily, March 3, 2016. Last modified March 3, 2016. Accessed December 13, 2020. <https://www.archdaily.com/783035/writers-theatre-studio-gang-architects>.

Authority's (DCHA) housing intervention densifies and pushes the height limits permitted by zoning requirements, the intervention I propose would maintain the low-rise row home design typology and shared courtyard configuration for a large portion of the intervention, connecting with the spatial association of the place. As proposed by the DCHA, the housing opportunities I proposed would also prioritize the displaced and immediate community.

### *Precedent analysis*

In creating the programming for the heritage center, I referred to precedents that reflect story telling, community resourcing, and community anchoring.

In the initial phases of forming this thesis, I deliberated between the two regions of the Barry Farm site. I considered creating a community anchor that would reflect the arts presence of Anacostia as well as supporting the needs of the immediate community. As I began searching for performing arts and music venues I encountered the Writer's Theater by Studio Gang Architects, A theater center. The Writer's theater, established in a small backroom of a bookstore in 1992 and later moved to reside in the Women's Library Club in 2003, exists as a popular theater company in the suburban village of Glencoe, 20 miles North Chicago.<sup>87</sup> As the company faced economic hardship and occupancy capacity challenges, the timely masterplanning executed by Glencoe to "to integrate more cultural and commercial spaces in the downtown area"<sup>88</sup> presented the opportunity for the creation of their own permanent theater.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Rojas, Cristobal. "Writers Theatre Opens New Theatre Center / Studio Gang." ArchDaily. ArchDaily, March 3, 2016. Last modified March 3, 2016. Accessed December 13, 2020.

<sup>88</sup> Rojas, Cristobal. "Writers Theatre Opens New Theatre Center / Studio Gang." ArchDaily. ArchDaily, March 3, 2016. Last modified March 3, 2016. Accessed December 13, 2020.

<sup>89</sup> Rojas, Cristobal. "Writers Theatre Opens New Theatre Center / Studio Gang." ArchDaily. ArchDaily, March 3, 2016. Last modified March 3, 2016. Accessed December 13, 2020.



*Figure 26 Writer's Theater Approach (source: Hedrich Blessing)*

Studio Gang's design for the theater primarily utilized transparency and flexibility to create a more welcoming presence in connection with the community as well as accommodating the growing base of patrons for the theater. What struck me in particular about this precedent was the idea of the lantern, which is a feature used in the scheme to house the main public informal gathering space upon entry and glows from within at nighttime to attract and engage the surrounding community<sup>90</sup>. A similar feature was employed in the Anacostia library, a glowing tower acting as a beacon, presenting an opportunity to create an architectural language that begins to connect community anchors throughout Anacostia. Programmatically speaking, the Writer's Theater proved worth the exercise of reverse engineering as the scale of the intervention, the measure of the theater resting at 36,000 sqft, and its location within a residential village proved similar to my own proposal. It became especially useful in

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<sup>90</sup> Rojas, Cristobal. "Writers Theatre Opens New Theatre Center / Studio Gang." ArchDaily. ArchDaily, March 3, 2016. Last modified March 3, 2016. Accessed December 13, 2020.

determining not only some of the program, including formal and informal gathering spaces, its respective support, and the gallery and library spaces.



*Figure 27 Weeksville Heritage Center in Context  
(source: Caples Jefferson Architects PC)*

The following precedent I studied was the Weeksville Heritage Center by Caples Jefferson Architects. Like Barry Farm, the Weeksville Heritage Center resides within the context of African American freedmen's community established in the 19th century in Brooklyn, New York that was also mostly torn down.<sup>91</sup> The Heritage Center, existing at 23,000 sqft, was introduced to the site as a “coherent community precinct” that features performance and educational facilities to service the surrounding community,<sup>92</sup> as well as farm landscaping to evoke the memory of the

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<sup>91</sup> Corda, Simone. “Weeksville Heritage Center.” *Caples Jefferson Architects PC*. Caples Jefferson Architects PC, n.d. Accessed December 13, 2020. <http://www.capjeff.com/weeksville-heritage-center>.

<sup>92</sup> Corda, Simone. “Weeksville Heritage Center.” *Caples Jefferson Architects PC*. Caples Jefferson Architects PC, n.d. Accessed December 13, 2020. <http://www.capjeff.com/weeksville-heritage-center>.

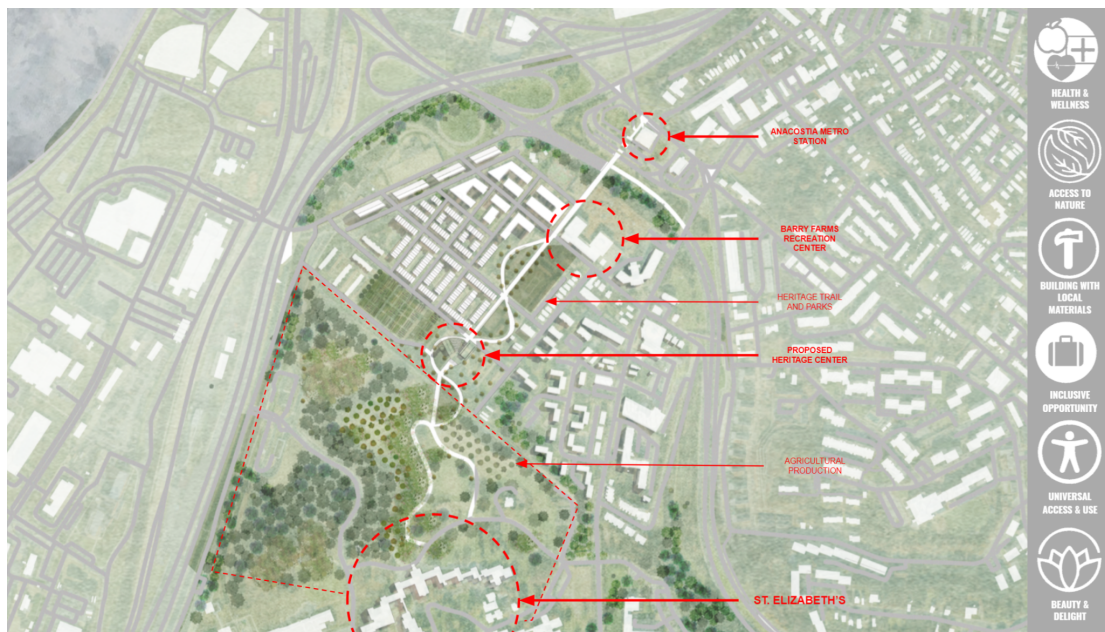
agricultural landscape once found there. Its central location primes the heritage center to act as a physical center of gravity within the community while respectfully taking up only a small portion of the site for the built intervention. The L-shape part of the center graciously extends out to the landscape and permits opportunities for visual engagement with the existing heritage houses by way of the “glass link,” a transparent corridor linking disparate wings of the building, and preserved sightlines to the properties from the exterior.

As this thesis progressed on to tackle preservation and heritage, The Weeksville Heritage Center reflects the tangible and intangible gestures I wish to explore in Affirming Identity, namely the visual engagement to land preserved for honoring the agricultural history of the site; the . I also referred to its programming in the creation of the Affirming Identity Heritage center as it has similar community resourcing and exhibition spaces.

## Chapter 6: Design Proposal

### *Master Plan Proposal*

Building from the precedent study and utilizing key design tenets, the Masterplan proposed by this thesis creates an agrarian community with a heritage trail that would be experienced as a journey connecting the axial relationship of the metro to St. Elizabeths campus.



*Figure 28 Masterplan Rendered Site Plan , (source: Author)*

The trail juxtaposes a primary axial path and secondary sinuous path to allow for spaces that engage with the memory of the site: namely community recreation and gathering. The recreation center has an abundant lawn for safe outdoor recreation for families with small children and students attending the nearby schools. While the



memorial park adjacent to the historic housing branches further out from the trail, it craves out a unique, contemplative space to honor the Public Housing and remains in proximity to the proposed farm.

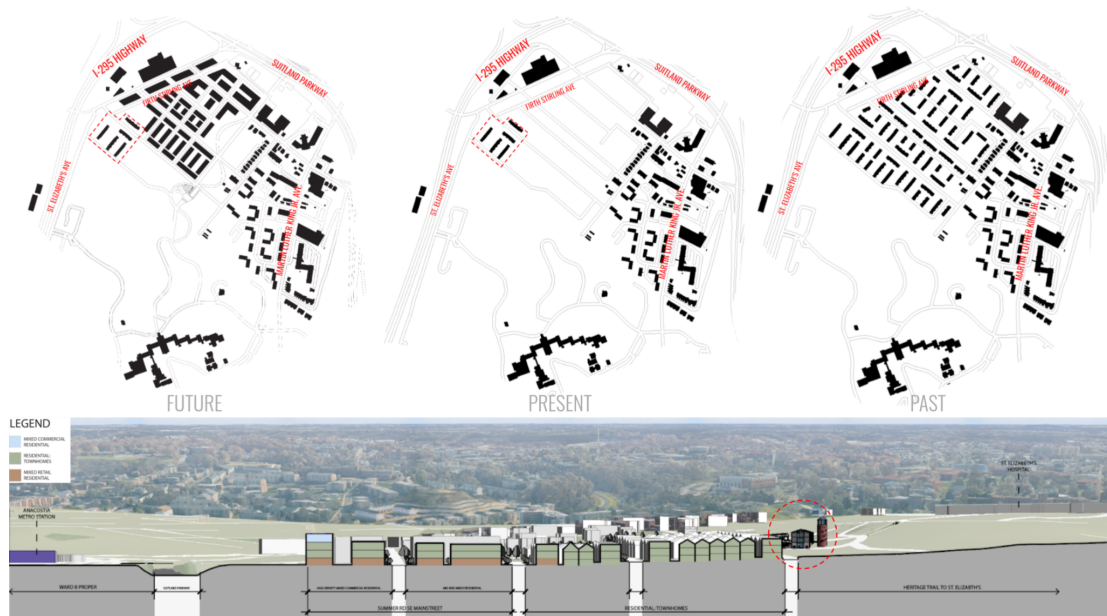
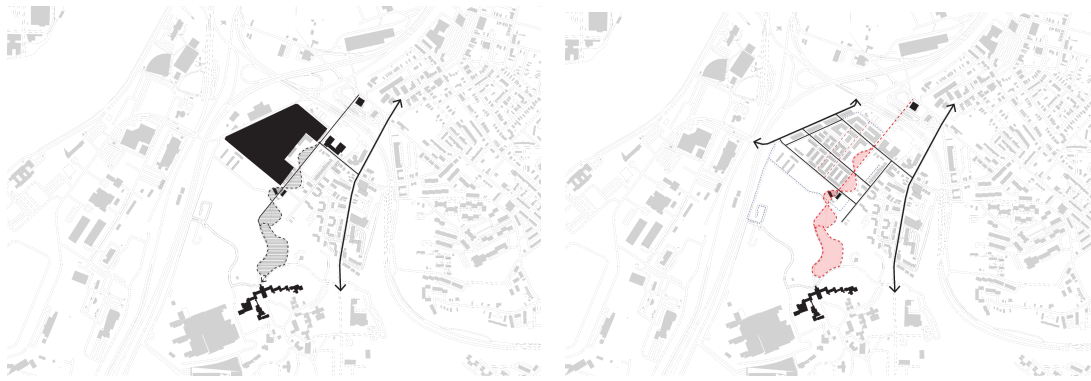


Figure 29 Master Plan Site Section and Proposal Figure / Ground (source: Author)

The community development creates a dense mainstreet condition with mid-rise, mixed commercial and residential buildings adjacent to the recreation center. This threshold has potential to eventually expand further out to engage with the highway infrastructure and encourage the growth of a pedestrian realm. avenue as well as creating plentiful rowhomes that reflect the spatial configuration of the public housing once there. The site configuration also begins to relate to its historical layers as the path continues toward the St. Elizabeth campus moving away from the dense, urban mainstreet condition, gradually reducing in density until it becomes a bucolic pasture as you arrive at the Heritage center.



*Figure 30a-30b: Proposal Parti and Circulation Diagrams (Source: Author)*



*Figure 30c-30d: Proposed Building Zoning and Landscape Diagrams (Source: Author)*

The Landscape begins to surround and engage with the community by way of the heritage trail, parks, and agricultural production. In its early stages, the dense forestry adjacent to the housing development creates a buffer between the community and the harsh environmental impact of the highway infrastructure.

Looking more specifically at the landscape strategy, having conducted research regarding the agricultural logistics, the plant hardiness of the region, D.C. falls within zones 8a near downtown, and zone 7b most other places in the city. The entirety of Washington D.C. exists within the 4A climate zone designation, meaning the climate is a mixed humid and moist condition - which can also be favorable as far as implementing permaculture strategies. While D.C. experiences all four seasons the

weather may vary on a daily basis, especially during the winter and summer months depending on the atmospheric moisture.

This was a useful endeavor as it also helped to determine the best plants to grow, within a growing season between March-November namely: Corn, tomatoes, melons, squash, collard greens, carrots, bush beans, asparagus and leafy greens during the cooler months<sup>93</sup>. Along with this, I considered the sizing and location of land to support raising livestock. The proposal designates the utility area between the community and the highway as the livestock farm. As the pedestrian experience expands out, the farm will have greater visibility and become a primary attraction for travelers and visitors.

Looking even closer at the main region of agricultural production, I referred to permaculture strategies to organize the plantlife.



<sup>93</sup> Grant, Amy. "Zone 8 Winter Veggie Garden: Growing Winter Vegetables In Zone 8." Gardening Know How. Last modified July 27, 2020. Accessed May 19, 2021. <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/gardening-by-zone/zone-8/winter-vegetables-in-zone-8.htm>.

*Figure 31 Agricultural Strategy and Zoning, (source: Author)*

The zone closest to, and surrounding the heritage center are the Kitchen Gardens which are primarily composed of perennial plants which would specially feature those used historically by African Americans like Basil and Sassafras, which have numerous calming and medicinal properties.

The next zone is where the Main Crop Production for consumption and trade takes place. These would feature the annual and seasonal crops enumerated in the discussion of land logistics. These crops would not only supply the Barry Farm Heritage Center, but potentially the greater neighborhood as well. As one of the earlier ambitions of this thesis sought to create greater community engagement through access, access to fresh food is another tangible measure of efficacy. The Mainstreet could also potentially feature a supermarket and apothecary as a draw to further explore within Barry Farm.

The following zone is where Intensive food Forestry occurs, which would use more integrated processes involving various vegetative layers including Fruit trees, root plants, and shade loving plants that symbiotically exist together. The original St. Elizabeth's Campus featured orchards of apple and peach trees in proximate regions to where they have been zoned in the proposal.

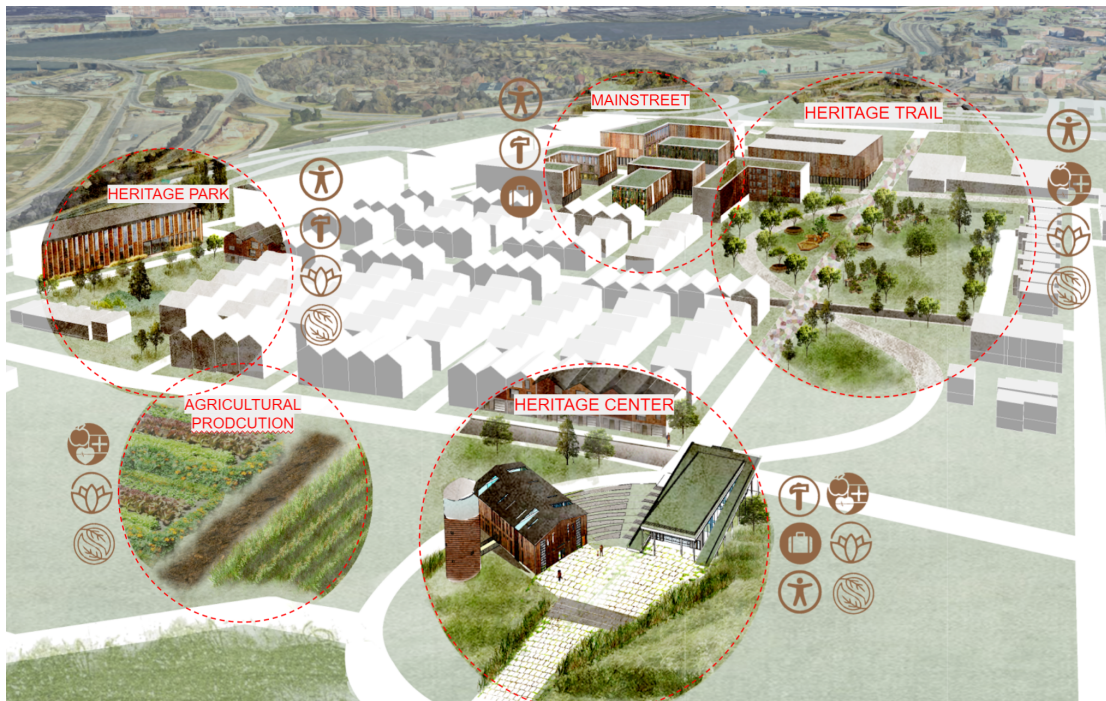
The final layer farthest from habitation is where Timber Forestry is located. Firewood and other wild plant life may be found here in addition to timber.

Considering what I propose for this site has a lot to do with the consumption and the disposal of food, I also considered strategies that would help sustain the community. As this site is primarily residential and most food waste is produced by



households, I would like to incorporate infrastructure such as composting and biodigesters to provide energy for the neighborhood, along with other sustainable practices such as solar energy collection.

The site intervention begins to employ the design tenets at various points in the project whether its natural food production and outdoor recreational space for health and wellness or the creation of the dense mixed commercial, retail, and residential mainstreet to create work opportunities for community residents.



*Figure 32 Master Plan Aerial View (source: Author)*

### *The Barry Farm Heritage Center Proposal*

Upon working through the heritage center, its design was intended to create a link and threshold between barry farm and the st. Elizabeth's campus while simultaneously creating a graceful ascent through the challenging topography, as well

as honoring the past and looking toward the future. As it exists in its current iteration, the heritage center is broken up into two forms - one that celebrates the histories, story and culture of the community and one that serves its people and thus houses programs to support both its functions, namely: multimedia and library spaces, open work spaces, an auditorium, a restaurant supplied by the local produce, and a gallery and/or exhibition space to showcase the History of Barry Farm.



*Figure 33 Barry Farm Heritage Center Approach Perspective (source: Author)*

Before delving into the heritage center, I should preface the conversation with a discussion of structure and materiality. As the “serve” building orients toward the cropland to overlook the community, its form takes on that of an agricultural utility building. Its minimal exterior is reflective of the historic outbuilding typology of

Anacostia which were primarily sheds and garages. Given the site strategy proposes Timber forestry, the facade would be finished with the various species of wood found there. Through this building, visitors have access to an observation tower which also takes on the agricultural typology of a silo. The “celebrate” building is situated parallel to the linear path and utilizes the material most associated with the expression of the community anchors present: brick. . As this building emerges from the ground it speaks to the history of masonry production and industry when the site was still the freedman's village. Its usage also begins to further relate to the St. Elizabeth's hospital which was almost entirely made up of brick sourced from the hospital grounds.<sup>94</sup>

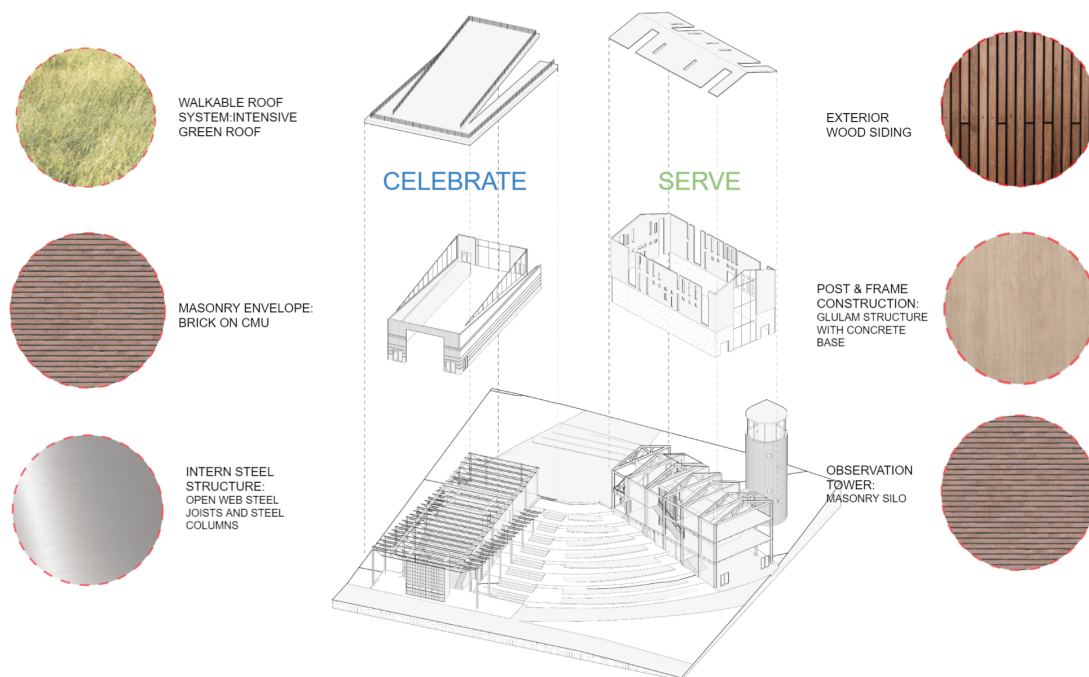


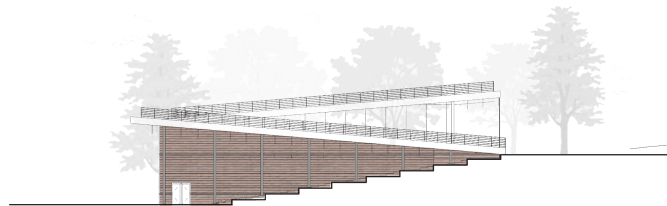
Figure 34 Heritage Center Structure and Material Strategy (source: Author)

<sup>94</sup> Thomas J Otto, St. Elizabeth's Hospital A History , St. Elizabeth's Hospital A History (Capital Region, DC: United States Government, 2013), pp. 17.

The “celebrate” building uses other industrial material such as steel beams, columns, and open web steel joists to support the walkable roof, which can be accessed from the plaza level. The “serve” building, similar to a barn or farm house, uses post and frame construction utilizing glulam wood members as well as a concrete base as it sinks into the ground. The observation tower beside it uses brick masonry in contrast with the horizontal expression of the “celebrate” building.



*Figure 356a “Serve” East Elevation, (source: Author’s work)*

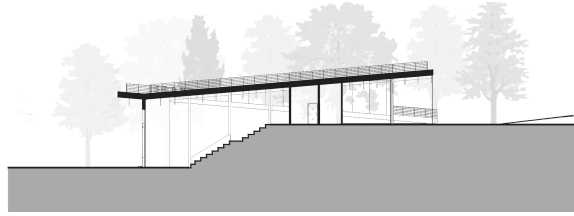


*Figure 35b “Celebrate” Building West Elevation, (source: Author’s work)*



*Figure 36a “Serve” Building Longitudinal Section, (source: Author’s work)*





*Figure 36b “Celebrate” Building Auditorium Perspective, (source: Author’s work)*

Following the heritage trail, the “celebrate” building rests parallel to the direct path and allows for access into the auditorium space on the ground level. On the opposite side of the public mixed access terracing the “serve” building engages with the sinuous path to allow access into the farm to fork cafe with a ceremonial stair shaping the main dining area.

As one ascends within the “serve building,” the stair deposits visitors to engage with the ambulatory gallery with a central void created by the dining space below. Upon moving through the gallery, the fenestration begins to open up to views out toward the community and crop land. Visitors may then proceed toward the observation tower or into the open library space that creates entry from the shared outdoor plaza between both buildings. Similarly, visitors experience entry into the “celebrate” building through the pre-function space that also coincides with the outdoor plaza.

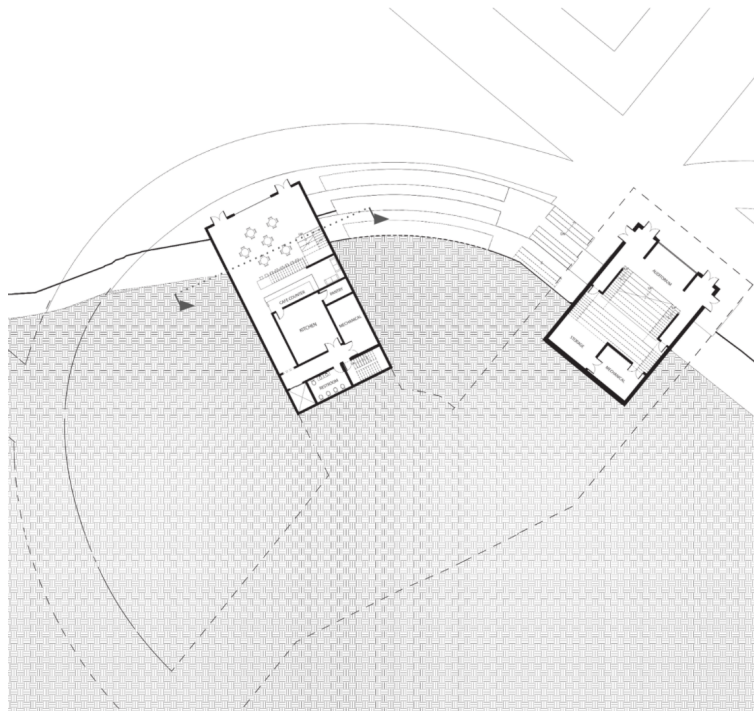


Figure 37 “Serve” Farm to Fork Cafe Interior Perspective (source: Author’s work)

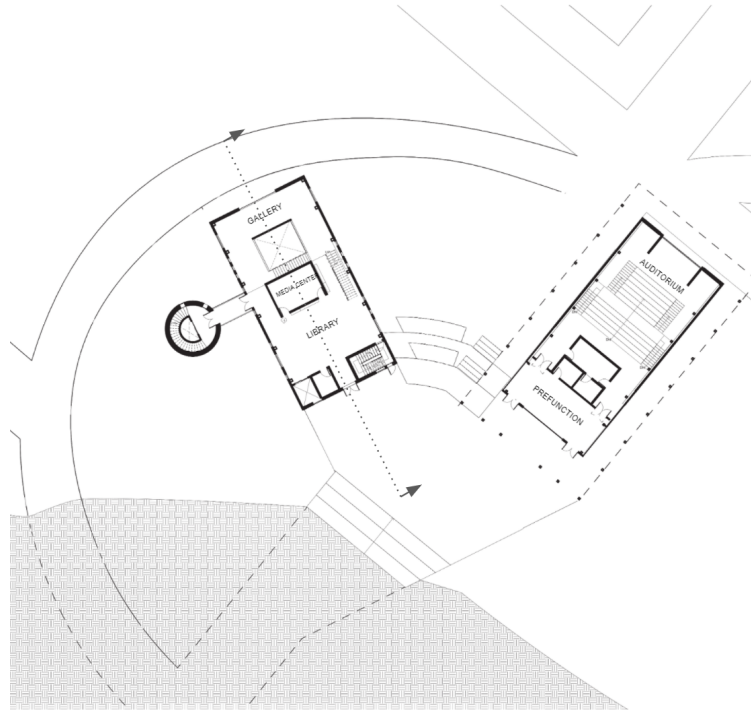


Figure 38 “Celebrate” Building Auditorium Perspective, (source: Author’s work)

From the exterior plaza, all visitors are able to walk or wheel up the “celebrate” building’s intensive green roof to the lookout point from the rooftop and take in amazing views of Anacostia. From within, the upper level of the “serve” building contains open office and flex space for open communication and collaboration, as well as a conference room looking out toward the bucolic landscape.



*Figure 39a Ground Level Plan (source: Author's work)*



*Figure 39b Plaza Level Plan, (source: Author's work)*



*Figure 39c Upper Level Plan (source: Author's work)*





Figure 40 Remembrance Celebration at the Heritage Center (Source: Author)

“The hills and valleys were dotted with lights...[T]he sound of hoe, pick, rake, shovel  
and hammer rang out through the late hours of the night”

-Hutchinson

## *Conclusion*

This thesis looks to use the built environment to serve and celebrate the historically disenfranchised communities within ward 8 by employing specific design tenets to create meaningful and uplifting spaces that honor the heritage, stories, and history of its previous lifetimes.

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